

**HORROR
SPECIAL**

THE MAGAZINE OF CINEMA & TELEVISION FANTASY N°44 70p

STARBURST

HALLOWEEN 2 — IN COLOUR!

WE LOOK AT THE SEQUEL TO CARPENTER'S HIT HORROR MOVIE

ROMERO/KING'S CREEPSHOW

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRODUCER RUBINSTEIN

**PLUS FEATURES ON
POSSESSION
FADE TO BLACK**

WE INTERVIEW HORROR DIRECTOR

WES CRAVEN

AND LOOK AT THE HORROR CLASSIC

SUSPIRIA

THE RETURN OF

FAB 50s

FILM POSTERS

GHOST STORY *HIGH ON STARS
LOW ON SUSPENSE*



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STARBURST

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Volume 4, Number 8

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STARBURST LETTERS

THE GORE CONTROVERSY

I am writing in response to Mr McCullough's letter (*Starburst* 42) in which he criticises *Starburst*.

I would like to say how much I enjoy reading *Starburst*. I started buying your magazine with some reservations, but as time has passed it has improved steadily until, in my opinion, it surpasses *Starlog*.

Keep up the good work and here is one reader who will continue to buy *Starburst*.

Mark Pearce
Derby.

In reply to your invitation for comments on the subject of gore in *Starburst* 42, I agree that if you print only non-gory stills from any particular movie you might mislead some readers, but I still feel that issue 40 was especially gory. It might be nice to include a few non-gory articles for those readers with slightly less strong stomachs. I think that gore is all very well, but in moderation.

Sue Fletcher
Surrey.

Just to set the record straight, Sue, out of 64 pages in *Starburst* 40 only 9 contained pictures of a gory nature. And out of the 16 features, only 3 dealt with movies with gore contents...

I was horrified (excuse the pun) on reading the letter in *Starburst* 42 by a selfish self-an about the coverage of gore movies in *Starburst*. I would just like to say if bias tendencies are adopted, you will probably lose readers. Although being a horror and fantasy freak, I still enjoy your reviews on science fiction and admira *Starburst* for keeping a liberal attitude.

I would also be pleased if you could print some material on *The Exorcist* as references are scarce. In my mind, the film has never been surpassed in frights or effects.

Vincent Orsini,
London W3.

We have been considering a Horror Classic piece of *The Exorcist*, Vincent Stay tuned to this channel...

I love splatter movies and I have been waiting, not very patiently, for *Meniac* to appear at the cinema. Have I missed it? If not, when will it appear. I'd like to start counting the days.

Adrian Brown,
London.

Still no news on that one yet, Adrian. As far as we can make out, it hasn't been picked up for British distribution yet. Soon as we know, we'll tell you, okay?

It looks as if the gore controversy that has been raging in various American film magazines for the past two years or so has reached Britain. In *Starburst* 42, Danny McCullough announces that he is giving up *Starburst*, (so presumably he



won't read this if it's printed), because of the gory nature of some of the photos used in it. Two points in his letter urgently need commenting on.

He says: "I get *Starlog* and it's not full of blood and horror." Of course it isn't—it has never claimed to be a magazine dealing with horror. It mainly features science fiction films, which are very rarely gory, and so a companion with *Starburst* is completely irrelevant. The same team responsible for *Starlog* produces *Fangoria* which deals only with gory horror films (and has been arguing the case for them for two years now) and so Mr McCullough is wrong if he thinks the Americans are as concerned for good taste as he is.

Alan McKenzie is dead right when he says that *Starburst* has a duty to cover these films, partly because there are more horror films than science fiction ones anyway and also because they are 'fantasy' products and *Starburst*'s main reason for existing is to cover these. Personally, I prefer horror anyway, and I particularly enjoy the effects created for them. Effects men like Tom Savini, Rick Baker, Rob Bottin and Stan Winston produce some truly brilliant work and it is only right that *Starburst* uses some of its space to show it. In fact there ought to be more material on this fascinating subject.

The second point that annoyed me about Mr McCullough's letter was his suggestion that cinemas are closing because all they can offer is *An American Werewolf in London* or *Dead and Buried*. I don't know how old he is, but Mr McCullough sounds like the sort of aged local councillor who writes to our local paper every now and then to complain about some film or other which he decided was really disgusting, (having first sat all the way through if it comes).

Dead and Buried has only just opened in Nottingham, so I can't comment on its commercial success, (I can say, however, that unlike Tony Crawley

in *Starburst* 40 I thought it was excellent), but *An American Werewolf in London* is now into its ninth week at the Odeon, which I must admit surprised me, and also pleased me greatly. I can remember Lucio Fulci's very enjoyable *Zombie Flesh Eaters* running for 8 weeks, his *The Beyond* (another excellent film) also did well, and double bills such as *The Ghoul* and *Legend of the Werewolf* also play to packed houses for several weeks. Not many non-horror films do that sort of business these days, so Mr McCullough is obviously misinformed. Horror films are getting audiences into cinemas, not turning them away. It is the outdated, unimaginative attitude of the Rank and EMI distribution managers that closes British cinemas, (that and those bloody awful adverts Mr Brosnan mentioned).

So, I would finally say that if a gory horror film can fill a cinema, shouldn't it be applauded and given as much coverage and publicity as possible? And that goes for *American Werewolf*... and *Friday the 13th* alike.

Moral of the story: stick to what you know about and don't knock other peoples' tastes—you might just be wrong.

J. Werd,
Wellaton,
Nottingham.

Issue 40 was a little gory, but if people make these films why shield us from them? The fact is that these are the films which appeal to the youth (and I'm one of them) market. Hasn't Danny McCullough seen issue 33? I've just seen (actually read in the newsagent) the latest *Starlog*. Lo and behold in a special feature on *Raiders* SPFX there is a lovely, non-gory shot of Toht melting. It seems that all Mr McCullough has to do is photocopy the letter to you with *Starburst* changed to *Starlog*, *Starlog* changed to *The Beans* and post it to the USA!

On the subject of issue 40 my mother

was standing in the local supermarket, when a woman behind her screamed. Yes, my mother had *Starburst* in hand and the woman had seen the werewolf doing an impression of Jack Nicholson on the back. My mum has become accustomed to such things—she is the person I take to see *Alien* and *Altered States* to beat the certificate. She still isn't sure whether she would like John Landis' *American Werewolf*.

Several annoying things about your superlative magazine. The major thing is publication date—you must know this so why print a 'preview' of *The Shining* when it's already on release? Print the dates of the *Five Faces of Dr Who* when the series has finished? The information on *Star Wars* on radio was also several months late. In issue 42 Tony Crawley then states that CE3K will be on over Christmas—we know—we've seen it! As we have 2001. Try and keep your magazine up to date. This way you might stop wasting space printing out of date "information."

Thank Yoda that you scrapped *Tales from the Rim*—it was appalling. The same accolade can't be given to *Flickers*, an extremely funny satirical comic strip. My favourites so far are the ones in No. 39 and 41.

Is Record World going to be a monthly feature? A wise move, but what about the superb score from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? One of my favourites *Capricorn One* also hasn't been reviewed. I know this might be advertising but any soundtrack collector should try 'That's Entertainment' in Covent Garden.

Cinema is excellent but does this mean that *Starburst* will get more specialised? I hope not, because then films on the border of fantasy will be dropped by *Starburst*—I'm meaning such non-stinctly fantasy as *Jaws* and *Raiders*.

Andrew Campbell,
Wokingham,
Berks.

AMICUS UPDATE

Readers looking for Part Three of *The History of Amicus* will look in vain in this end probably the next issue. As much of the text of this history is taken from interviews with former Amicus head Milton Subotsky we are dependent on his presence in this country. Unfortunately Mr Subotsky has been called to the United States to take part in the legal case which is currently underway. Subotsky has found it necessary to sue his former partner Max Rosenberg for a variety of reasons to do with the company and the protracted legal complications will keep him out of this country for some time. Normal transmission will resume as soon as possible.

Phil Edwards and Alan Jones,
 London.

BEASTMASTER

So *The Beastmaster* is a "Conan" rip-off, eh? Is it too surprising, therefore, that the major production painting you show in *Starburst 42* bears more than a passing resemblance to a Frazzetta painting? Or two, to be exact? The major figure is from "A Princess of Mars," the compulsory (or even compulsive) scantily clad female is from "At the Earth's Core."

Of course, maybe Frazzetta did the art for *The Beastmaster* (I couldn't read the signature)—in which case I'll buy a het and eat it!

Graham Wood,
 Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

In reply to Danny McCullough's unfortunate letter, he seems to forget that in their time, films like *Frankenstein*, *Dr X* and *Nosferatu* were excused of being too horrifying and brutally repellent. *Psycho* was darghly graphic, both sexually and violently by 1960s standards. Yet today these are regarded as classic films. Today, films such as *Dawn of the Dead*, *Dressed to Kill* and *The Breed* are attacked by critics for their violence. Do the same critics condemn *Taxi Driver*, *The Wild Bunch* or *Bonnie and Clyde*? No way. These are serious quality films. Horror films deal with



death, so violence plays a major part. But it's *fantasy*. We know that no one is really hurt. We know that vampires, zombies and monsters don't exist.

So if Mr McCullough wants to move over to *Starlog*, fine. True, it's not full of blood and gore, but then it's not really full of anything. I'll stick with the best.

Starburst.

John Kelly,
 Scotland.

HARRISON POSTER

This is a nice begging letter. Please, could you have an interview and a large colour poster of Harrison Ford as soon as possible.

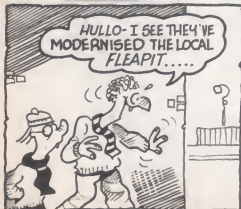
We are astonished that, as yet, your wonderful magazine has had no feature on the acting superstar of the eighties. We hope that you can remedy this.

Karen and Sam Lee,
 Sidmouth,
 Devon.

We don't think that you have been paying attention, Karen and Sam. We published a lengthy interview with Harrison Ford way back in *Starburst 3*. And there was another in *Starburst 43*. Plus, of course, there is an interview and full colour poster of Harrison as Indiana Jones in our newest magazine *Cinema*, still on sale as you read this. End of plug.

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FLICKERS BY TIM QUINN & DICKY HOWETT



THINGS TO COME

KING PLUS CARPENTER!

Stephen King certainly learned his lesson from *The Shining*... He's staying clear of auteurs. Just as shooting ended on his *Creepshow* comic-book of a horror movie, directed by his pal George Romero, comes the news that King's *Firestarter* book is being prepared at Universal and another Romero mate will direct John Carpenter, no less. Sounds like one halluvs year ahead of us...

KING PLUS ROMERO

Once the *Creepshow* editing is over, George Romero and partner Richard Rubinstein (interviewed this issue) are reserving a fortnight to shoot various test footage with the United Artists Theatre Circuit's amazing new 3-D system. Steve King will most likely be lending a hand and certainly watching the results with interest; Carpenter, too, for that matter. As yet, George has no actual project planned for 3-D. He's just testing...

Incidentally, *Creepshow* will be opening in the summer—exactly when Steve Spielberg's production of *Polttergeist*, directed by Tobe Hooper, makes its bow. "That's okay," says George's producer and partner, Richard Rubinstein. "Competition is good. These pictures should expend the market, not share it." Fine words. But I haven't heard Spielberg's opinion yet.

DAMNED HOLD-UP

Still no ADR from MGM (or UA or UIP) on LPB's dream of re-making VOD, OK? That is, producer Lawrence P. Bachmann can't get moving on re-telling *Village of the Damned*, the el cheapo but el magnificent 1960 hot from John Wyndham's book. Bachmann was the original executive producer, and for the sequel, *Children of the Damned*, in 1963, as well. Metro hold the re-makes rights, though, not him. Since delivering *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* to the cinemas (with Richard Dreyfuss in Tom Conti's stage role), Bachmann has various projects in the hopper, including the directing debut of *Star Wars* producer Gary Kurtz. What Bachmann really wants to do, though, is re-tailor *Damned* to the modern screen.

He aims to retain the title of Wyndham's book, *The Midwich Cuckoos*, and is staving off MGM's suggestion of re-setting the tale in America rather than Britain. "The new film will be set in Oxford where I live," states Bachmann. "We'd be able to do an uncensored adaptation. In 1960, we could not address abortion in the script, but in the new version the issue will be met head-on." Or so he hopes, if MGM forget that *Whose Life* isn't performing as well on film as it did on the West End and Broadway stage (or on BBC-tv, come to that, where Ray Brooks originated the role).

Bachmann is not about to give up, though. He feels Wyndham's account of



George Romero.

whiz-kid kids challenging humanity (bred by aliens, you see) is far more timely as adult sf today than 22 years ago. He's not after any mammoth budget, though rather more than the meagre 195,000 dollars the first one cost (that would hardly cover a Hollywood janitor's monthly pay cheque these days). He's fought for his *Cuckoos*, before, of course.

MGM never thought much of the original... which was damn nearly shelved until it found some support from Sol Siegel, a top MGM producer. Released as an exploiter, it proved one of Leo The Lion's studio's biggest 60's hits. So what, one asks, is Leo waiting for this time...?

KURTZ DEBUT

Gary Kurtz won't be so far away from *Revenge of the Jedi* after all. He'll be directing his swarpe in Britain while the Lucas saga is underway. The Kurtz film is *Mr God, This is Anna* about a kiddie touched, as they say, by the Almighty. Producer Bachmann calls it "the other side of *Carrie* and *The Exorcist*."

NORMAN'S A NO-NO!

How do you feel about a *Psycho* sequel? Hmm, I thought so. The author of that Hitchcock classic is, however, fighting tooth and nail to put the mockers on a pair of unknown independent movie-hustlers from doing just that in a movie to be called *The Return of Norman*.

Gary Travis and Michael January say the notion came to them, out of the ether almost, while penning a routine

haunted house—wall, motel—number. Hey, what about the Bates Motel... and yeah, old Norm's just busted out of the asylum... and Lila Crane has bought the joint and... (You can fill in the dots, I'm sure).

Well, the Los Angeles papers made a meal and a half of the guys' plans. They advertised the movie under their Picture Striking Company Inc logo. Although the images are bleached-out photos, the ad plainly shows Vera Miles (Lila Crane that was) with clutching hands, Tony Perkins (aka Norman Bates), in silhouette and the familiar *Psycho* homestead. In short, friends, it all looks extremely kosher; except I've a bunch of such ads for other films which never got within an inch of any movie camera.

Undertaxed by such comments, Travis and January claim to have elicited interest in their scheme from Perkins himself (well, he's into schlock lately). They've also put out feelers to Vera Miles and, for some odd reason, Martin Balsam, too. (As private eye Milton Arbogast, Balsam was killed in the Hitch film in one of the best death scenes in movies as even Friday the 13th director Sean Cunningham would have to agree). The guys also admit to offering Jamie Lee Curtis the role of Lila's daughter and they're honest enough to add that Jamie called the proffered role "dumb". The role, maybe, but not the idea behind it. Jamie's mum, Janet Leigh, was, of course, the Marion Crane knocked off in the shower, another of the best deaths in movies, (Right Sean?)

So far, Universal, who now own the rights to the Hitch film, have said very

little, if anything at all, pro or anti the plans. Robert Bloch, however, has said a lot and not all of it publishable, I'm sure. In a nutshell, Bloch says the book, and all fictional rights appertaining to it and the characters in it, are his copyright.

Besides, Bloch has his own sequel book ready. This, as I read in *Cinefantastique* magazine, takes place "in a parallel universe and with the action brought up to date." Now that sounds interesting. The Picture Striking Company's script (or idea) (or suggestion) sounds more like *Halloween III*... Oh did I forget: Martin Balsam is supposed to be Norman's shrink. If they can't get him, I suppose our hustlers will chasa after Donald Pleasence.

But—and it has to be said—there is a lot of sense in a *Psycho II*. If the right people handled it. I can't say if Travis and January are those people. I doubt it. I called them movie-hustlers because, as far as I know, they're not movie-makers yet. They're obviously hustling around Hollywood, wanting to be in on the good times, like Spielberg and Carpenter before them. Considering the almighty fuss they've stirred up with *The Return of Norman* notion, they might even manage it, too. Whatever Bloch says about them and their parentage.

ICEMEN COMETH

Universal obviously like John Carpenter's *The Thing*—and all that ice-black and blockaded-ice footage shot up near the Arctic, because the studio has lately stepped in and rescued a Norman Jewison project dropped by United Artists. This is the iceman film due to be directed by John Irvin, the *Ghost Story* man. No truth in the rumour that the film is based on any of the remarkable iced-up stories stemming from our blizzard of a winter. Scripted by Chip Proser from John Drimmer's sf yarn, set in the Arctic again, it reveals the origin of our species following the discovery of the title role—a human ancestor from way, but like way back. Norman Jewison and Patrick Palmer produce, as they did on British John Irvin's first movie, *Dogs of War*.

STEVE'S SECRET

Well, now, here's a surprise. You may remember me reporting—oh, months ago—how Steven Spielberg was producing a movie called *Night Skies*, written and directed by John Sayles (*Battle Beyond the Stars* writer). Then, a little later, how Sayles wasn't directing it after all, Steve was and the title had become E.T. And then, how Steve had junked the whole thing in favour of his "little kids" film, *A Boy's Life*. Well, friends, it now appears they're all one and the same movie—Spielberg has it almost in the can. No new title at present, but the effects footage (shown Stateside in a Universal coming-attractions trailer) are said to be sensational. More information when I have it. I'll be watching this space.

Compiled by Tony Crawley

GREAT SCOTT

Once he's started with the cutting of *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott will direct another slice of science fiction—the 30-million dollar *Legend of Darkness*. "It's an sf fairy tale," says Scott's producer, Arnon Milchom, an Israeli industrialist who lives in Paris. He's *everyone's* producer these days—Martin Scorsese's on his *King of Comedy* thriller with Robert De Niro and Jerry Lewis, Sergio Leone's on his *Once Upon A Time in America* (which has been planned for 14 years and eventually begins in April), and even Polanski's producer of the diminutive Pole's Paris stage production of *Amadeus* as in Warsaw last year. Polanski directs and plays the title role. Mr. Milchom is obviously a man with good taste.

VID-DISC SPOCK

Meanwhile, how are the new video-discs doing in America? Terrific! But slow... That's why RCA is adding 162 more titles this year. After the first twelve months since they first anchored in the cassette market, the top vid-disc sellers proved to be: 1, *The Muppet Movie*; 2, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*; 3, *Airplane!*; 4, *Star Trek—The Motion Picture* (or, indeed, *The Video Disc!*). What's more interesting is that topping the non-movie lists is an old *Star Trek* tv episode: *The Menagerie*. And know wonder... it's a reel collector's piece. It was the eleventh show from the very first 1966/67 season of the tv series. It used footage from the never-aired pilot show, *The Cage*, which had the late Jeffrey Hunter as Captain Pike (before William Shatner's Kirk took over). It's also one of the better *Spock* stories. He's court-martialed for mutiny and can be seen in both his original (pilot show) and later more familiar *Spockan* make-up. Yeah, a must for all Trekkies. So when do we get a chance to see it, RCA?

CAPT WORK!

William Shatner is returning to the box in a new cop show with the unfortunate name of *Hooker*. That's the Shatner role, of course, not one of his victims. He plays a hard-working cop, a bit of a dinosaur in his belief that "the law is the law." As a divorcee, there is to be plenty of sob stuff about his personal problems as well. But, of course! His sidekick will be played by Adrian Zmed, and the show is being made by the *Charlie's Angels* people, now supplying six hours of American tv prime-time a week.

1981—THE WINNERS ARE...

As expected, by the time the computing was done and America's *Variety* trade paper issued its annual list of the box-office movie winners of the last year—George-Boy and Indiana Jones topped the poll. Easily! *Raiders of the Lost Ark* earned 90.5 million dollars in the United



Top left: Enter the heroes, Christopher Reeve as Superman. Top right: Roger Moore as James Bond. Below left: Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones. Below right: Sam Jones as Flash Gordon.

States—*Superman II* was second way down at the 64-million mark (which is less than the 81-million *Superman I* took two years ago). Fantasy and comedy (and sequels, notch) ruled the US roost. Eight movies in all topped the 35 million dollar mark, and even on its re-issuance *Empire* struck back with a take of 14 million, far better than, for example, *Altered States*, *American Werewolf*, *Escape from New York* or *Halloween II*. (The Carpenter-produced show earned exactly the same as the Carpenter-directed show, although *Escape* opened last June and *Halloween II* only bowed in October). Come to that, the last *Star Wars* re-issuance earned rentals of close on ten million, beating off *The Howling*, *Blow Out*, *Dragonslayer* and *Scanners*. Little doubt then that George Lucas remains King.

The actual Top Ten winners were: 1, *Raiders*; 2, *Supie II*; 3, *Stir Crazy*; 4, *Nine to Five*; 5, *Stripes*; 6, *Any Which Way You Can*; 7, *Arthur*; 8, *The Cannonball Run*; 9, *Four Seasons*; 10, *For Your Eyes Only*.

How these and the rest (particularly when adding up the last Lucas re-issuance) effects *Starburst's* Fantasy Chart will be revealed... shortly. Meanwhile, how about...

BRITAIN'S BEST

After America (and I'm sure, not just America), it comes as a shock to find that *Raiders* only managed to edge into Britain's Top Ten Films in 1981, at eighth position. The reason? Who knows! Of course, the No 1 film, *Superman II*, opened earlier for business, but then *For Your Eyes Only* premiered around the same time as the *Lucasberger*... and managed to hit No 2.

The reel cause of *Raiders'* lowly position has to be laid at the door of the nation's generally depressed state. (The year's 90-million ticket-buyers is the lowest ever!) With none too much money to fling around at the box-office when faced with a choice between *Bond* and *Raiders*, the public went for what it knew and trusted best. *Bond!* The fact that it happened to be the worst 007 film since *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* didn't come into it.

But to be frank I cannot wholly explain why such thumping entertainment as *Raiders* is No 8 and *Flash Gordon*, of all films, made the No 3 slot, and even Clint Eastwood, Goldie Hawn and *Clash of the Titans* out-distanced *Indy Jones*.

Apert from such quibbles, one has to

view this Top Ten (or indeed the full Top 20 as supplied by *Screen International*) with a certain amount of pride. Both patriotic and generic. Six of the Ten could be classed as being our genre (though you could quibble about *Bond*) and seven of the Ten, including the first three, all had British technical assistance. When *Starburst* was founded over 3 years ago, we never for one moment thought six (or even five of our kind of movies would ever generate so much attention in a single twelvemonth. As I've said here before, we are arrived...

The positions of *Superman* and *Bond* are a complete reversal of their last (1979) battle, when *Moonraker* beat *Superman—The Movie* to the top. Next time around (1983), neither one will stand a chance... not with *Revenge of the Jedi* opening on May 27, 1983. Book now.

The full Ten? 1, *Superman II*; 2, *For Your Eyes Only*; 3, *Flash Gordon*; 4, *Snow White*; 5, *Any Which Way You Can*; 6, *Clash of the Titans*; 7, *Private Benjamin*; 8, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*; 9, *The Elephant Man*; 10, *Tass*.

THINGS TO COME

UPS & DOWNS

Following the rotten news that last year's total of Britons going to the movies sank to (yet another of our country's) all-time lows, come the American figures of an all-time high. Odd, isn't it, considering in the main, we both get much the same movies. British cinema attendance dropped to about 90 million ticket-buyers the worst since 1980s 101 million which had been the worst since 1976's 107 million. The American numbers? Oh, a mere 1,027 million...! One studio out to make sure those kind of figures are maintained and improved upon this year is Paramount, in the mixture-as-before business. This year Paramount will release *Star Trek II*, *Grease 2*, *Friday The 13th Part 3* and... you sure you're ready for this... *Airplane 2*. Anyone interested in backing my script for *Greasy Fritrekplane-day the 3rd Part 13*...?

DOWN & OUT

Cinema attendances may well continue to rise—and in Britain, too—because of video cassettes. The writing is now on the wall. The cinema is winning in this video revolution, and television is beginning to feel the pinch. Last year in America, tv-movies won better ratings than cinema movies on tv—for the simple reason Americans had their own cassettes of most of the movies being televised. Now, I hear that the sale of films, particularly new films, will be much curtailed by the studios as they well know that one night's screening of say, *Star Wars*, on the box, means that everyone with a VCR will tape it, so no-one will watch it on its second official viewing, nor go see it on its next re-issue.

With 20-million VCRs estimated to be in US homes by 1986, the safest place for Hollywood to show its movies will be... where else but the good old friendly neighbourhood cinema. Not all producers or studios would agree, of course. They love the big bucks the networks pay for their movies; in many cases they need those bucks to turn a movie into profit. And certainly, films can earn more from a tv sale than a cassette deal. For the moment, what they hate about tv or video—or even cablevision—is the obvious threat of the movie being taped or printed, call it what you will, and thereby losing its long-term value. Damned difficult to do that in cinemas! Believe me, the day of the cinema is not yet dead...!

DISNEYVISION

One Hollywood studio, is plainly in love with the box... and to a degree never even dreamt of before now. Believe me, if you like drawing, painting, and feel like taking up animation as a living, send off your credentials to the Disney studios immediately. They're much in need of new artists and if their amazing new plans take off, it could be a job for life... or until you go insane drawing all those cuddy, humanised forms of the animal

kingdom.

In an astonishing move away from cinemas, the Disney folk will soon be supplying sixteen hours a day of fee-vee for a new cablevision outlet to be called—what else—The Disney Channel. (Yes, sixteen hours a day!)

Obviously the programmes can draw on the studio's mammoth library of cartoon shorts, features, live-action documentaries, maybe even the old *Davy Crockett* series, and all manner of other family entertainment that want out under the umbrella title of *Disney's World* for twenty years on network tv in America. Put all that on daily, end with the help of some of the movies, it might fill one week. Hence, Disney's 100-million dollar investment over the next three years in new shows, much animation (and new animators). In short, what the studio is already hyping as 'a new generation of Disney artists'.

The plan is to improve the standard of tele-animation and to appeal to all ages. The family, in fact. The Channel should start operating—just put the coin in the slot, or subscribe—by the end of this year or early '83. Part of the current hype is suggesting grandparents and the like buy a subscription to the channel as a birthday or Christmas gift for their young kin.

Oh yeah, as well as cartoons and films, the channel will also include live shows from (and much publicity for) Disneyland, Disney World and the new billion-dollar EPOTC centre (based on tomorrow's cities) in Florida.

I must admit to a slight fear about the next generation of Americans. What on

earth will they be like after watching Disney's make-believe goody-goody world for sixteen hours a day throughout their youth. The mind boggles!

DISNEY MOVIES

Disney is not quitting the cinema, for all that. [Dr not yet]. In fact, they're lavishing a healthy 85-million bucks on movies this year. (What with the 100-million on cablevision, a thundering 470-million more on the now close to billion-dollar EPOTC park this year, one wonders where the money comes from. From Disneyland/World, that's where, no matter how well, their cinema reissues clean up around the globe every school holiday.)

Two of the studios '82 movies will cost between them almost the full 55-million spent last year. These are the Dan D'Bannon end Ronald Shusett trip, *Total Recall*—and *The Black Cauldron* animation film. Both will cost 20-million dollars. Cheap at the price, considering *Blade Runner*, *Dark Crystal* and *Ravage* of the Jedi are all budgeted around the 24/26-million mark. Dino Laurentis looks like topping the budgetary pile this year, though. He's intending pouring 30-million in *Dune*, directed by *Elephant Men's* David Lynch. So there!

But back to the Disney shop... The Christmas '82 release will be Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*; the new sf-cum-video-games number, *Tron*, with 'advanced computer, light and optical effects' it

says here, come out for the summer, and the annual re-issues will include *Bambi*, for the sixth time since 1942 in its forty years, *Robin Hood*, and *Fantasia*—with, or so I'm told, a new soundtrack. This presumably means the old one re-mixed in Dolby, rather than an actual new recording, otherwise Leopold Stokowski will be standing up there, conducting something other than we're hearing. (The man who developed the three-channel Fantasound for *Fantasia*, Charles H. Hisserich, died at the end of last year, aged 74).

CINE-TECHNOLOGY

Hollywood names are beginning to hit out at the lamentable standards of cinemas and film equipment. Alan Alde recently the guest at a theatre owners' convention, blasted them for their badly-run and poorly-cleaned cinemas. Now, Douglas Trumbull has attacked the cinema for not keeping up with television in the utilisation of modern electronic equipment. He says most cinemas are still using projectors and sound systems which were originally housed within the cinemas way back in the '30s or '40s.

"I'd like to see a whole new rush of interest," pleads Trumbull, "to get together and try to design improvements in the motion picture... it's survival prospects don't look too good right now."

Francis Coppola, of course, is in the forefront of trying to do something about all this from the film-making angle. He used video extensively in the making of *One From The Heart* and is combing the world for a suitable sit for his "studio of tomorrow"—his dream of a super electronic, videotronic and even satellite way of making movies. This could be settled in Hollywood, but he's not sure. He's not considering leaving, but just recently he was checking on the 8,866 square miles nation of Belize, formerly British Honduras. Very handy, he says, just 90 minutes from Miami. He wanted to buy Pinewood studios, of course. Now he thinks the best thing to do is copy what the movie pioneers did when finding and creating what we know today as Hollywood. That is—start from scratch someplace. Anyplace!

CORMAN TECHNOLOGY

While Trumbull and Coppola talk about it, Roger Corman has already put the future into action today. His new production of *Sector 13*—a sf thriller about mass communications going on the blink—is the first Hollywood movie to be totally shot on video. This side of the work is being carried out by Studio 30, headed by Robert Stone Jordan. Ha, it was, who wrote to Corman some months ago, extolling the video advances he'd made in video-to-film transfer techniques. Corman invited him to his Venice (Santa Monica) studio to give him a demo of what he was



Video warrior in Disney's sf film *Tron*.

THINGS TO COME

bragging about and Roger was sufficiently impressed to switch the new movie project from film to tape.

It's quite a gamble, of course. It's been tried before, notably on MGM's **Norman ... Is That You?** in 1966, directed by George Schlatter, and on Antonioni's comeback movie, **The Mystery of Oberwald**, in 1980. Neither experiment could be called wholly successful. But then, video techniques have been improving by the second!

Roger Corman obviously sees tape-shooting as a way of beating his major headache in movie production—high budgets. Not to mention the lengthy time it takes to shoot and edit a movie along with effects, music and so on, for release. He reckons taping **Sector 13** could save his combine as much as 13 per cent in budgetary matters. (So he could save a fortune if he made **Journey Beyond the Galaxy** this way.) (see below).

And now for the more technically-minded brains out there in readerland, let me see if I can come up with the full information for you ... The Corman film is being shot with an Ampex digicam. This uses the 525-line system (unlike British tv's 625). But due to the Ampex vertical resolution and computer drive, I'm told this system allows a far greater resolution of picture than usually available on 525 lines the equivalent of 1,200 lines, according to Corman.

Burbank's Image Transform will transform the edited tape to film, with its Image Vision process which, or so they claim, provides 35mm quality in the transformed picture resolution.

For the movie's special effects, Robert Stone Jordan is using the Ultimate keying systems and the Ampex digital video effects (DVE) system. All editing, by the way, will be done by Jordan's company on the Ampex computerised editing (ACE) system. Is that clear? A matter, it seems to me, of all systems go. Or hopefully so.

ROGER'S JOLLIES

Also on the Corman slate of '82, an updating of **Death Race 2000**, called **Grand Prix 2000** for now. That doesn't sound quite meaty enough for movie that, according to Roger, "is involved with the destruction of civilisation." Plus **Journey Beyond the Galaxy**, which he quite simply refers to as the biggest science fiction project he's ever tackled. "It will," he promises, "be comparable, state-of-the-art in special effects, to what George Lucas is doing." Aha ...

CORMAN WOMAN

One of the saltiest treats to have been given to us by jolly Roger Corman is Mary Woronow—that tall, strapping, mean-eyed bitch in **Death Race 2000** and **Hollywood Boulevard**, among other classy B-movies. She's currently among the people working in Hollywood's newest form of film-making—for cablevision only. Her cablestitch job is **The Protectors**, a bit of a Bond send-up (as if

Roger Moore wasn't already). Mary's co-star is the hard-core porno queen Marilyn Chambers. *Stop salivating out there ...!*

"The Protectors," insists Mary, "is not porno. It's soft, absolutely soft." (Even so, I see what you all mean ... The very thought of La Chambers and La Woronow stalking about in the same movie ... yeah, fair gets you going doesn't it?). Will we ever get to see it in Britain? Possibly. Cablevision product can be sold abroad to television networks (like the **Bizarre** show on Yorkshire) or to cinemas.

RIP

Sad to report the sudden death in California's Apple Valley, of bulky Victor Buono at 43 and 400 lbs. Although having a solid stage career behind him (Falstaff etc, with the Globe Theatre Players in his home town of San Diego), the mighty Buono is best remembered, I'm sure, from his Oscar-nominated role in Robert Aldrich's **Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?** in 1962 ... when he was 25 and 300 lbs. From then on, he supplied an endless selection of overweight villains in the bizarre as well as Sidney Greenstreet mould, in such movies as Aldrich's **Hush**, **Hush Sweet Charlotte** (in which et 27 he passed for the father of Bette Davies, then 57), **The Strangler** and Italy's **Lo Strangolatore di Vienna**, better known as **The Mad Butcher**. Plus, of course, heaps of teleseries stuff, from Patrick Duffy's arch-enemy, Mr Schubert, in **Man From Atlantis** and his amusing King Tut in **Batman**. His last movie was **The Man With Bogart's Face**, aka, **Sam Marlow**, **Private Eye**, the movie with Bogie lookalike Robert Sacchi. Victor, naturally, filled the Greenstreet role.

ON THE PROWL

The killer's back from the war. His target is the girl who jilted him, and the guy who had her wilting for him. He gets 'em both. With a pitchfork. Flash-forward 35 years and the young bloods are holding their prom night or dance night or whatever it is the Americans call these bashes. It's the first whatever since ... well the night the necking twosome got skewered. And guess who shows up and, well, kind of pitches in. You've got it ... Oh yeah, and the effects are by Tom Savini.

You've seen it? Of course you have. Except this version is called **The Prowler**. Directed by Joseph Zito written by two more zeros, Glenn Leopold and Neil Barbara, and starring absolutely nobody we'll hear of again. Pity, 'cos it starts well, and if it had kept the opening setting—the war he's back from is the 1939-45 affair—the on-goings events would at least have been quaint enough to appear Gothic. Oh, there is one star, Farley Granger as the local lawman. He should know better. He was in Hitchcock's **Strangers on a Train** thirty years ago. He should never have got off.



LES AVENTURES DE L'ARCHE PERDUE

Change of pace. According to the French, Raiders had a tough time making it at the box-office in London (and it did due to Bond). So they changed their minds about the original ad art. Oh sure, to start with they took up the USA art ... but switched layouts considerably just before opening time. I can't say it's an improvement, but my goodness it's working. Raiders buried everything else in sight, French, American, Italian, German, Japanese, Indian, African ... you name it.

LE RETOUR DE LA GRANDE AVENTURE !



X-Ray

Review by Alan Jones

When this film was first announced by Cannon in the trade papers, it was to be about a psychopathic surgeon who was experimenting with organ transplants. It was called *Ward 13* and it was to star Jill St John. However, another year, another trend and there is now no hint of anything resembling *Coma* in the film, now called *X-Ray* (or *Hospital Massacre* depending on which county you live in), just very monotonous stalk and slash. The star has also been changed to Barbi Benton. Yes, the ex-*Playboy* centrefold-cum-recording-artist herself. And if all this sounds totally off-putting, good—but I haven't finished yet!

The story now concerns Susan Jeremy (Benton), who goes to the hospital to pick up some x-rays of a routine check-up and finds herself surrounded by dead bodies and severed heads when the plan to have her diagnosed as terminally ill goes wrong for the vengeful valentine she snubbed 19 years before. This makes *My Bloody Valentine* look like an all-time masterpiece. *X-Ray* is so bad it could almost be construed as an unintentional parody but this might suggest a certain amount of humour, which is not the

case at all. One thing I do guarantee though is that you won't believe your eyes. Barbi Benton at one stage is hiding behind a screen to escape the maniac's clutches. Not only does he miss her perfectly obvious legs sticking out from below a curtain, but he also fails to see her drop a cigarette lighter and try to retrieve it with her foot. Glaringly stupid scenes like that would test anybody's patience—even if you're like me and pride yourself on being able to sit through absolutely anything. Then there are the deathless lines of dialogue like:—"Ms Jeremy is under observation", "What exactly does that mean doctor?", "It means she is under observation". So that's what it meant! There is also the question as to how all these doctors and nurses can be murdered and disappear without anyone seeming to care. Dr Jacobs (Gay Austin) gets dispatched very early on in the film and the days that follow, no one thinks her vanishing in the middle of appointments with patients is strange. As you can see the many elements for parody are all too conspicuous—the *Airplane* team would have a field day—and yet Cannon's in-house director, Boaz Davidson (the man responsible for umpteen *Lemon Popsicle* movies), plays it dead straight. All this nonsense has been concocted by scriptwriter Marc Behm, who has to his credit, incredible as it may seem, *Charade* and the *Beatle's Help*. Barbi Benton isn't that bad, to be fair, but all she seems to be on hand for is the long drawn out medical examination where you can be sure to see

every part of her body that propriety will allow.

X-Ray will be the first of the recent Cannon roster of horror/fantasy films to be given a proper release. In case you were wondering what had happened to *The Godsend* and *Schizoid*, they died a death on a small test release last year. *The Apple* is apparently too awful even to consider releasing. *New Year's Evil* will be released with *X-Ray* and it finally looks like *Dr Heckyl* and *Mr Hype* will also be coming off the shelf at last.

However, Cannon's name on any film in the early 70s was always a sign to beware. *X-Ray* gives me no ray of hope whatsoever that my opinion of this company could be changing in the foreseeable future.

X-Ray (1982)

Barbi Benton (Susan), Chip Lucia (Harry), Jon Van Ness (Jack), John Warner Williams (Dr Saxon), Gay Austin (Dr Jacobs), Den Surlis (Dr Beam), Michael Frost (Ned), Karyn Smith (Kitty), Marian Beeler (Mrs Edelman), Eliy Wold (Mrs Fedrow), Johnathon Moore (Mrs Parry), Tammy Simpson (Eva), Bill Emigo (Janitor), Lanny Duncan (Hal), Thomas McClure (patient), Beverly Hart (Suzy), Jon Greene (Tom), Judy Baldwin (desk nurse), Elisabeth Hoy (young Susan), Billy Jacoby (young Harry), Mikael Romano (young Dave).

Directed by Boaz Davidson. Screenplay by Marc Behm. Director of photography Nicholas Von Sternberg. Production design by Jac McAnelly. Music by Arion Ober, Associate producer Christopher Pearce. Produced by Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus.





FAD BLA

Review by Alan Jones



At the heart of *Fade to Black* is a very good idea. A young movie buff who becomes so obsessed by his celluloid pastime that he kills anybody who bothers him in ways all patterned after characters and incidents from his favourite films. That's the central theme and directed by anybody with imagination and flair doubtless it still could be an excellent movie. Unfortunately, *Fade to Black*, directed and written by Vernon Zimmerman so the blame must rest squarely on his shoulders, is a mess. It is contrived to an embarrassing degree which doesn't help the very ragged plotting one bit. It isn't particularly well-acted either and something is definitely wrong with a film when the film clips it incorporates (ie *Night of the Living Dead*) turn out to be the scariest footage in the movie.

Fade to Black wastes time. It plays for a full 45 minutes and all we learn in that time is that Eric Binford (*Dennis Christopher*) is a film fanatic with an endless amount of grudges against his invalid aunt, his workmates, his boss, the film producer who steals his idea for a film and the Marilyn Monroe lookalike who doesn't turn up for a prearranged date. Actually, that does sound like a lot happening when you see that written down but in the film's terms it isn't at all. Eric's escalation into psychosis is brought on when his aunt bursts into his room to scold him while he is watching *Kiss of Death* and we see him get the idea to implement the on-screen murder for real. From here on we see reenactments of *Psycho* (the shower scene, naturally), *The Mummy*, *Dracula*, a Hopalong Cassidy



E TO ACK

feature and *The Prince and the Showgirl* before Eric climbs to his death on Grauman's Chinese Theatre aping James Cagney's Cody Jarret in *White Heat*—"Look Ma, Top of the World!"

Actually the Hopalong Cassidy segment is the eeriest of the lot as Dennis Christopher, in a face mask, confronts the two malignant workmates and shoots one of them dead. There is menace contained here. There is atmosphere too, all sadly lacking from the film as a whole. One of Zimmerman's biggest faults is in over-establishment. With regards to Eric's boss, you really do only need to see him clutch for his heart pills once to get to the point. Likewise, the over-emphasis on the two investigators assigned to tracking down 'The Celluloid Killer'. They are extraneous to say the least, their parts could both be cut from the film and you wouldn't even notice, but Zimmerman insists we get to know them via cute and concerned dialogues that go nowhere. Admittedly though, you would then miss one of the highlights of the film. As they confront Eric, Moriarty the social worker detective says, "We can help you, Eric", only to blurt out seconds later after an attack, "You're out of your f***ing mind". So much for social commitment in the police force.

What with *Fade to Black*, *Chariots of Fire* and seeing him act on Broadway with Elizabeth Taylor in *The Little Foxes*, I can only surmise that Dennis Christopher's performance in *Breaking Away* will be all we'll ever remember him by. All we will ever remember of famed Monroe lookalike Linda Kerridge is her guttural Australian accent. She does look superb in the reenactment of *The Prince and the Showgirl* (such an odd choice of Monroe movie I thought), but the moment she opens her mouth the illusion is shattered.

Zimmerman's film is also cheap and unsavoury looking. Perhaps the cult director of *Unholy Rollers* was after this nuance to make a point about the tarnished tinsel of Hollywood. This cliché need look no further than this end product for that statement. I may be being too hard on the film but unlike so many other trashy movies around at the moment it has a great idea that is so full of promise it is just such a shame to see it wasted.

The ardent movie buff gets a raw deal too. Eric's world looks depressing, claustrophobic and oppressive which isn't the standard of course but how many people will realise that? Perhaps Eric's introverted moroseness comes from seeing too many bad movies. Like *Fade to Black*. If that were the case I would gladly sympathise. Who's first, Eric? The director... or the producer? ●



Review by Alan Jones

The trivia buffs amongst you may be interested to know that the original title for this film was *The Burning*. However, that's about all that's interesting about this dire sickie-quickie that for some reason GTO Films saw fit to wrest from the American drive-in circuit where it well and truly belongs and release here.

Director Joseph Ellison blatantly and unrepentantly steals from Hitchcock in this *Psycho* revisited tale about Donny Kohler (*Dan Grimaldi*), who returns home late after an accident at work to find his mother is dead. As she seemed to be worse than Joan Crawford in the child brutality stakes mercilessly holding his arms over a lit gas stove if he was naughty, he really couldn't care less. But we've all visited the Bates motel more than once and know what happens to young men in the deceased clutches of their domineering mothers. And sure enough, before you can say Janet Leigh, Danny is luring young girls back to his fireproofed steel room where he chains them up and tortures them with a flamethrower. If that wasn't enough (the censor seemed to think it was as

DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE

he has cut two minutes from the film), he dresses up the burnt bodies in his mother's clothes so he can vent his long pent up spleen at these displacement matriarchal figures.

All this rubbish is taken in actor Grimaldi's stride. He acts and looks like a low energy Dustin Hoffman seemingly oblivious to the surrounding tackiness. *Don't Go in the House* is so wonderfully tacky at times it propels you through the boredom often by sheer nerve. I found it hard to resist the scene where Donny, who has been fixed up with a blind date for the evening, goes to a men's clothing store to be kitted with a new outfit and is given advice on what the latest trends in disco fashion are. As a coda to this, the disco scenes are so poverty row that it is a lesson to us all on low budget film-making. However, all this is sadly beside the point. Apart from a few of the more elementary textbook *frissons*, there is really nothing here to write home about, or more to the point, write a review about.

Only because it is in keeping with the basic shoddiness of the film will I use such a cheap parting shot as—*Don't Go in the House?* Don't Go in the Cinema. ●



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POSSESSION



Review by Phil Edwards

Possession is a film about the breakdown of a marriage. It's a movie about domination and obsession. "If I lay like a dog at your feet would you walk over me?" asks Marc (Sam Neil) of Anna (Isabelle Adjani). He does and she does.

Possession is a film about self-mutilation. Anna, following an argument with Marc cheerfully starts slicing into her neck with an electric carving knife. Lots of blood. Marc, after patching her up sits at the kitchen table, and not to be outdone goes to work on his arm with the same knife. More blood.

Possession is a film about monsters of the Id. Anna has a secret lover in a secret apartment. The lover is a many tentacled creation by Carlo (Kinga Konga) Rambaldi. They make love all of the day and all of the night. Anna manages to get pregnant by The Thing and gives birth to a little Thing in the subway. Five minutes of solid screaming mercifully reduced from ten. Lots of blood and gelatinous slime emerge from her body.

Possession is a film about gay private eyes. One is put on the trail of Anna by Marc. He discovers the secret apartment and the secret lover. He takes it very well, considering. Anna sticks a broken bottle through his neck. His partner (and lover) meets a similar fate. Both end up in black plastic garbage bags and the heads are kept by Anna in the fridge.

Possession is a film about political intrigue. Marc is a government agent of some kind. He has a meeting with his superiors. They want him to do one more job, because nobody does it like Marc. They sit in a room the size of Waterloo Station with nothing more than a desk and chairs. While they talk the camera moves in a complete circle around them. The dolly leaves no tracks in the carpet. Very clever.



Possession is a film about the effects of broken marriages on children. Young Bob (Michael Hogben), son of Marc and Anna, after watching his parents go through their paces of personal disintegration runs upstairs, fills up the bath, jumps in and drowns himself. He holds his breath very well.

Possession is a film about clones and cloning. Marc meets Helen who looks like Isabelle Adjani in a wig. It is, of course, Isabelle Adjani in a wig. Helen is Young Bob's school teacher. She gets paid a lot. We know this because she lives in an apartment only a little smaller than Buckingham Palace. Nice line of high tech furniture. She is Marc's idealised version of Anna.

Possession is a film about revenge. Marc meets Heinrich in a bar after Heinrich is stabbed by Anna. Marc gets Heinrich bombed out of his brain on some drug or other, blocks up the toilet, fills the pan and drowns Heinrich. A lot of good Karate and Tai Chi do Heinrich then. Maybe Heinrich should see Young Bob about how he held his breath for so long. Maybe it's a comment about the way the toilet is used by EST. Maybe it symbolises Heinrich's return to the womb.

Possession is a film about blue. That's right ... blue. Everything is blue or blue tinted. Maybe Andrzej Zulawski (the director of **Possession**) got a good deal on outdated film stock.

Possession is a film about the future. It looks like Berlin. Marc and Anna's flat looks out to The Wall. Well, it's a wall and there are guards on it and barbed wire and stuff. As the final Apocalypse rains down on Helen I thought "Ahh, World War Three! No, World War Four!" I was told by somebody from New Realm (the film's distributors) "Oh ... " thought I as I left the preview.

Possession is a film about low trash masquerading as high art. Confused? You won't be after next week's episode of **Possession**.

Feature by Tony Crawley

The scene, Berlin Airport. West German Customs man notices a guy collecting his luggage. Bulky stuff. Six large wooden crates. They could almost be coffin lids. With whatever is the German version of "Hello, hello, what's going on 'ere, then?" the Customs officials collar the passenger off the flight from Los Angeles.

"What," they chorus, "exactly is in these boxes?" The visitor raises his eyebrows at the young Frenchwoman awaiting him on the other side of the barrier. To open or not to open, that is the question.

He uses delaying tactics, producing a lot of paperwork that should settle everything. No, not enough. Reluctantly, he opens one of the coffins. Customs men peer in. Large, shiny black tentacles peer out. Customs men back off hurriedly.

Well, they should have known better.

The incoming passenger was Carlo Rambaldi, the Italian movie special effects man who has worked on more than a hundred movies since 1957. His credits range from *Cleopatra*, *The Pink Panther* and *Modesty Blaise* to Fellini's *Juliette of the Spirits* (which also featured a long black tentacle, I seem to recall). What's *New Pussycat*, and *La Grand Soeur*.

He is, though, rather more recently famous and Oscar-awarded for making John Guillermin's *King Kong* and Charlie Bronson's *White Buffalo*. For creating Spielberg's Puck ET at the end of *Close Encounters*, the *Nightwing* bats, Ridley Scott's (or H.I. Giger's) *Alien* and Michael Caine's *Hand*.

I mean here is one guy with those creepy-looking luggage one just does not mess with!

He was at the airport because he had lately completed his first effects for a European film in four years or more.

The creature, the entity, the slimy tentacled thingie born, literally, out of a tragic young woman's demented mind in a Franco-German exercise called *Possession*.

Take one look at *Possession* and just like those Teutonic Customs' boids, you back off... wondering just what has hit you.

The answer, of course, is Rambaldi. Even more so, the answer is a Ukrainian-born Polish film-maker whose film work was banned so much in (pre-Solidarity) Poland that he has joined the lengthy list of cinematic exiles living in France. A certain Andrzej Zulawski.

Possession is his thing, his creation, a dream film three or more years in the setting up. More of a nightmare, really the monster Rambaldi made for the film depicts that which the leading lady has created from within herself, from out of herself, her dementia.

"At the beginning, we weren't sure that the monster should be seen," comments Marie-Laure Reyre, the film's talented and rather beautiful producer. (She spent two years on bringing the film together after picking up the rights from Zulawski's previously interested backer.) "It was a big decision to show or not to show... or maybe, just show a little as in *Rosemary's Baby*, when you never fully saw that was happening, but you certainly felt it."

When director and producer decided they would show the creature—that they would in one sequence, show the entity making love with the film's dull lead, Isabelle Adjani—the problems really began. Who could make it?

"We started meeting all the special effects people here in France, in England, and in Germany, where we were going to shoot the film. And then, *Alien* opened. We saw that and decided to meet Giger. We sent him the script and Giger said, 'The person to do this is Carlo Rambaldi.' We said fine. We thought he was close by in Italy. Not at all! He was in Los Angeles."

The duo flew over to California (that's how budgets start to increase) to meet the man with his two Oscars for *King Kong* and *Alien*, with all his dollar-lined Hollywood deals. They were, Marie-Laure admits, a trifle scared he'd say No, not to mention, that he'd prove overly expensive.

"That too, of course. And at first, he did ask for a lot of money. So we explained, this was a European film, not a big American budget. We did not have the kind of money he should receive. So, we spoke quite a long time and then he said, 'Okay, I'll do it.'"

Starburst: What convinced him to take the film on—Europeanism?

Marie-Laure: He liked the story. He liked Andrzej. He liked Andrzej's film a lot. And I think he also trusted me. But it was not easy at all to start building this special effect in Los Angeles... when we were shooting in Germany. He designed everything in California and when he'd made it, he came to Berlin with the whole thing in a... in a suitcase?

No, it was more of a coffin. Five of them. That was something funny, the scene at the airport. Could be a great scene in a movie... How did Rambaldi go about designing the... er... the... what do you call it? The creature. The entity.



The design was hardly left to him. Surely Zuluwsky had some visual notion of what he wanted. He is a most visual director, after all.

Zuluwsky never knew exactly what he wanted. Or not until we found Rambaldi. He was the first person who understood what Zuluwsky required. Zuluwsky had the idea but didn't know how to put it on paper. He knew, too, of course, how he wanted to use it in the film, especially at the finish, but Carlo was the first special-effects person we met who could complete this... idea... in reality. That's why we used Carlo Rambaldi.

He had five coffins, because of various versions of the entity—or sizes—developments, is that it?

In fact, it's four. Because the last one... it is Sam Neil.

And despite rumours to the contrary, Rambaldi didn't make Sam.

Does that mean Sam Neil is playing the half-man, half-monster thingie in the love-making scene. On reflection, it does look like him—his hair at least.

You can think that was Sam Neil. It was not Sam Neil. In reality, it was a stand-in for Sam Neil.

And this joker was connected up to all these tenebres and stuff?

Yes. And it was something quite heavy, he was in a very uncomfortable situation.

How well did your two schedules dovetail. Rambaldi was working in LA, as you say, while you're shooting in Berlin.

Your schedule would be tight given your Euro budget (2.4 million dollars), his would be tighter still considering his better paid jobs elsewhere. His stop was more urgent than the unit's?

Yes, exactly. And this was the main problem on this production. We started shooting on July 7 (1980) and until August 19, when Carlo arrived, we had one scene only delayed. Everything was going well. Carlo arrived with his monster and stayed fifteen days, working all the time.

and we became two days over schedule.

That's not bad where effects are concerned.

(She nods.) I understand when Ridley Scott was making *Alien*—and his was a special-effects film, our film was not—he was able to take, two weeks or more for one scene! For us, it was not like that, of course. But when you have all the special effects arriving on the set, the whole crew becomes a little scared. The director de la photo, the camera-operator, they're always scared—never knowing how the material will take to the lights and so on.

What was the reaction of the crew when they first saw the thingie?

Oh, look, they were not amused. They saw how difficult it was for Zuluwsky, the actors. For everybody. So they were very respectful. As you're asking me the question, it's maybe you want me to say "Oh, they were all laughing."

But that's not so, although we can imagine that they were a little amused, perhaps.

No, I thought the opposite. I was thinking that the creature was not brought on the set until it was in full working order, and that would have been the actors' and the crews' first sight of it. And something of a shake!

No, everybody, the actors as well, were there as we made the preparations for the scenes. It was more difficult for the actors than the crew.

Yes, well, they had to deal with it. What about director's reaction? The creature is, after all, the result of his imagination rather than Isabelle Adjani's.

There was no confrontation? Zuluwsky went six times to the United States to see the mequente (design) and followed la naissance (the birth) of the entity. So he knew how it was. Me, too, because I'd been going to Los Angeles as well. I was pleased with it. Very pleased.





Possession

(1981)

Isabelle Adjani (as Anna/Helen), Sam Neil (Marc), Heinz Bennent (Heinrich), Margit Carstensen (Margie), Michael Hogen (Bob, the child), Shaun Lawton (Zimmermann), Johanna Hofer (Heinrich's mother), Carl Duerling (Detective), Leslie Malton (Sara, woman with club-foot), Maximilian

Ruthlein (Man with pink socks), Thomas Frey (Pink Socks' acolyte), Gerd Noubert (Subway drunk).
Directed and original screenplay by Andrzej Zulawski.
Adaptation and dialogue by Zulawski and Frederic Tuten.
Photographed by Bruno Nuytten. Special effects by Carlo Rambaldi (The Creature); Daniel Brunschweig, Charles-Henri Assola; Make-up by Ronaldo Abreu; Stunts by Herbert Wiczorak. Music by Andrzej Korzynski, Edited by Suzanne

Lang-Willer. Art director Nefzer Gross. Costume design by Ingrid Zore. Sound engineer Karl-Heinz Laabs. Assistant director Eva Maria Schmecker. Production manager Jean-José Richer. Produced by Marie-Laure Reyre.
An Orlane (Paris), Marianne (Paris), Somax (Berlin) Franco-German co-production, for UK release by New Realm; reviewed at Cannes festival, May, 1981.
Time: 122 mins Eastmancolor (1/65 frame size) Cert: X.

HALLOWEEN

When our esteemed editor called me up and asked me to see *Halloween 2* I must admit to becoming a little excited. After all, it was the first time that John Carpenter had returned to a genre that he had started with his enormous hit *Halloween*. The huge success that film spawned a whole flock (or should I say splatter) of rip-offs and cheap imitations. **Friday 13th; He Knows You're Alone; Terror Train; Toolbox Murders; Don't Go Into The House; Terror Eyes; Hell Night; Friday 13th Part Two** and so on have passed through the pages of this magazine, usually reviewed by the indefatigable Alan Jones. The teenagers, assorted gorey murders which rely on the skill of the make-up artists. They also feature scripts of frightening ineptitude, performances by has been/never weres (delete where appropriate) and rely almost totally on graphic gore to elicit audience response. They also usually make me feel a bit sick, usually for a variety of reasons that range from the fact that I've seen so much of this kind of film over the last two years and that like most viewers my response to the mechanics of such films is sufficiently programmed. The genre has created and then imitated its own clichés. In a way the Splatter Genre (and after two to three years of these things, and no end in sight, it deserves capitalising) has become as predictable as the B Western genre did in the 30s and 40s. These movies have become an alternative to a ghost train ride at a fun fair. Like such rides, splatter movies are cheap and tacky and deliver a thin thrill.

Carpenter's first run through in the subject, *Halloween*, was a superbly-crafted feature relying on suspense and dark menace to deliver a film that jolted audiences and managed to garner some sympathy for its characters. It introduced Jamie Lee Curtis to audiences and within a year she became the heroine of several like films including the ludicrously embarrassing *Prom Night*. Everything was *right* about *Halloween*. Its blend of horror and black humour received a terrific audience reaction (particularly in America) and apart from becoming the most financially successful independent feature ever made assured John Carpenter both a place in the film history books and made him a "bankable" director—something neither of his previous features *Dark Star* and *Assault on Precinct 13* had done.

With *Halloween's* megabuck wyes it was only natural, that a sequel should be thought of (don't miss a trick, those Hollywood moguls) and the only surprising thing is that it has taken three years for that sequel to appear. The film starts with a run through of the end of the first film. Not the original footage I hasten to add, as Carpenter wasn't directing, but rather new director Rick Rosenthal. Some may say this is to give the sequel a style of its own, but I rather think it's more for the viewer to adjust to the fact that Ms Curtis has aged something more than the three years between films. Where in the first film she was able to play a 17 year old, it's something that just isn't believable this time around.

So with Donald Pleasence pumping six shots into The Shape and finding nothing but a bloody patch on the grass where the corpse

Feature review by Phil Edwards



EN 2





should be, **Halloween 2** starts. I have to admit that for the first fifteen minutes I was hooked. With Carpenter's haunting synthesiser score echoing around the preview theatre and Dean Cundey's Panaglide camera cruising the streets of Haddonfield taking in the on-going trick or treating of healthy American children as Pleasence tries his damndest to find The Shape before he strikes again, I felt I was going to be in for a treat. But I wasn't. All Carpenter is handing out is a trick. A rotten, lousy trick of a movie. A movie, that had I paid to see it would have had me demanding my money back at the box office.

A great deal of **Halloween 2** takes place in a hospital where Jamie Lee has been taken after the attack of The Shape. Oddly enough, that's where The Shape heads off to finish off the harrassed teenager. For, you see (and I have no compunction in telling you this), it turns out that Jamie Lee is The Shape's sister. This plot revelation was obviously meant to be a surprise of some magnitude, sort of **Halloween's** answer to **Empire Strikes Back's** revelation that Vader is Luke's father (that didn't surprise me either) but with all the other plot inanities, it kind of fell flat.

While The Shape is roaming around killing off whoever he can find, we only see one patient in the hospital (I'm not counting the three babies in the nursery), a fact that is a little disturbing. I started thinking that medical expenses in America had skyrocketed and nobody could afford to go to



what Rosenthal had shot and felt the film needed a little extra something. He was right, of course. If the murders were taken out of the movie then what would be left would be boring. Rosenthal has said in an interview that he wanted the film to build slowly to a terrifying pitch. We must give him the benefit of the doubt and in all fairness don't think that the failure of *Halloween 2* can be landed at his feet.

It is a John Carpenter film, despite the fact that he didn't direct it, and really should be treated as one. The fact is that Carpenter co-wrote it (with Debra Hill), co-produced it and scored the film as well as shooting the extra "shock" footage and no doubt was responsible for the editing of it as well.

The really sad thing about *Halloween 2* is that John Carpenter's name is attached to it all. Carpenter certainly is a great and growing talent and we're all looking forward to *The Thing* with great anticipation. But if Carpenter lends his name and talent to another farrago like *Halloween 2* then he'll appear to be on the slide. Plotting faults in both *The Fog* and *Escape From New York* were acceptable and the fact that *The Thing* was not written by Big John indicates that he maybe aware of his own limitations in that department. But *Halloween 2* is simply stupid. Sure, in movies like this it is commonplace for protagonists to



hospital. Maybe Haddonfield is such a clean-living place that nobody gets ill.

The one patient that we do see is a small boy, who unfortunately has a razor blade lodged in his mouth and spits out gouts of blood whenever he tries to speak. Despite all the other scenes of gore in the film, and there are quite a few—we'll get to those in a bit—this sequence is the most disturbing and, in a way, disgusting. Where Carpenter managed the difficult task of blowing away a little girl in *Assault on Precinct 13* without disturbing our innermost feelings, the effect in *Halloween 2* is simply repulsive. To use such a graphically gory scene out of context is simply excessive and is meant (I'm sure) to act on a subliminal level. And if this is just the first ten minutes, what *else* is going to happen?

The hospital staff is also a little low. A couple of obligatory, well-endowed nurses, a couple of porters (one in love with Jamie, one smoking dope watching *Night of the Living Dead* on the Late Show) and a nightwatchman are all that staff the place. The nightwatchman is the first to go, with a hammer through the skull. Pretty soon people are being drowned in boiling water, drained of blood and getting nasty injections into the side of the eye. All these murders are lovingly lingered on in close up and most occur without dramatic build-up. They were just tacked on in fact by Carpenter after principle shooting was completed.

Apparently, Carpenter wasn't too happy with



enter dark rooms when they know that something nasty may be waiting, but in this one they do it so often and with such monotonous regularity that one half expects them to leap through the doorway and yell "I'm here! Kill me!" The hospital is cloaked in almost total darkness, with just enough light to catch the glimmer of The Shape's weaponry.

There's lots of other tedious devices used. The phones are cut off by The Shape, but nobody thinks of using the two-way radios in the ambulances parked outside, or simply hot-wiring a car to get into town to get help. This illogic reached its height when Jamie Lee staggers out of the hospital, and after managing to avoid her murderous big brother, can't raise a scream as Donald and co pull up in a car. Even sillier is that she drags herself to the door of the hospital (Shape in slow pursuit) and rather than jump in the car that's parked two feet away and drive off, waits for help and The Shape to arrive almost simultaneously.

Halloween 2 is full of such crass stupidity and despite its slick visual style, which matches the first film perfectly, ends up looking like one of its own imitators. It would be nice to think that this is the last in a long series of salacious sleaze pictures but reportedly *Halloween 3* is being considered. All I can say is that by the time it reaches our screens, John Carpenter's good name won't be anywhere to be seen on the film. I hope ●

A Starburst interview by John Fleming

DENNIS SPOONER

Dennis Spooner has written for everything from Gerry Anderson series to *Doctor Who*, *The Avengers*, *The Professionals* and *A Man Called Sloane*. He also created and co-created many of the highly-successful ITC adventure series of the 1960s, like *Jason King* and *The Champions*. Yet he remains little-known in comparison with his contemporaries Brian Clemens and Terry Nation. John Fleming tries to put the record straight.

He was born in Tottenham, London, on 1st December 1932 and claims he has developed "an inverted snobbery about education." He says he must have had less education than anybody else in the country except possibly those who didn't go to school at all. He was supposed to start school in September 1939 but one little thing got in the way: the outbreak of World War II. Most children were evacuated from London but he remained there throughout the War. "My mother was fairly dramatic," Dennis Spooner says. "We were all going to die together."

Because of the evacuation, there weren't enough children in Tottenham to justify a school, so young Dennis had about half an hour's schooling every week at a Quaker house then, when the Blitz died down, he started school proper in 1941. "At that time," he says, "the school-leaving age was 14. But, when the War ended in 1945, they came round as said 'Well, you're 13. There's not much we can do with you. You might as well go.'"

So Spooner left school at 13 and began working for the Post Office, who allowed him one afternoon a week at "quite a good school" and it was during this time that he developed two interests: showbusiness and football. He played for Leyton Orient's third team at a time when it included several part-time professionals. He also appeared in Ralph Reader's boy scout Gang Shows.

"I lived in a road that was exactly like Coronation Street," he says, "with the Mission Hall opposite. I joined the scouts because they were in this church hall literally across the road." Eventually, he was talent-spotting. "It was absolutely marvellous," he says, "because, until that time, I thought showbiz was something you saw, not something you did. Ralph Reader had directed Al Jolson on Broadway and virtually retired in his thirties or forties because he'd done everything and, on those shows, he was a bastard really. I can remember doing a dress rehearsal the night before one of the shows and he rehearsed the kids all night up until about 3 o'clock the following afternoon. We went through a sketch I was in 56 times. But, when the show went on, you suddenly realised the sheer hard work that goes into everybody looking natural."

When he was 18, Spooner had to do his National Service in the Army and was posted to Egypt: "It was at the time of King Farouk's abdication, so we were all confined to camp. Entertainment was zero. So they went round saying *Who knows anything about shows?* I'd come from this marvellous four or five year background in the Gang Shows where we even did a Royal Command Performance. I'd hob-nobbed with the professionals, so I knew how shows were put together and I was interested because I'd rather rehearse shows than do guard duty. At the time, the



Egyptian students had a habit of creeping up on the perimeter and shooting the British guards. You could say my entry into theatre was born of cowardice."

Someone from the Forces Broadcasting Service saw Spooner's performances and offered the young man a radio show. For 15 minutes every Saturday, he could comment on the week's events. "It was only current affairs," says Spooner, "in-as-much as *Not The Nine O'Clock News* is current affairs. I'd deal with what was going on in an irrelevant way. After that, I compared a variety show. Then the C.S.E.—Combined Services Entertainment—started to bring out a lot of comedians and shows and I got involved. I mean, after doing two years in Egypt, you were talking a new language. A lot of Arabic words were used and genuine Army slang and, in the end, outsiders had to concentrate hard to know what was being said.

That's when I started writing. These comedians would give me their scripts and I would translate them and they would go on and get very big laughs because the audience didn't expect the in-jokes."

After his National Service ended, he returned to Britain: "I got a job in the City with the Railway, Mine and Plantation Equipment Co Ltd. By this time, I was writing odd jokes and was going to submit stuff to various comedians for the BBC radio show *Workers' Playtime*. There was a secretary in my office who said *Oh, there's a fellow lives next door to me who writes scripts and sent some to Max Bygraves. I'll ask him how to set them out.* And this guy was Johnny Speight (who later created *Till Death Us Do Part—US: All in the Family*). It was a lucky break which was to pay off years later. In the meantime, Spooner had to struggle hard:



"As I say, I had no education and wasn't good enough as a footballer and I messed around. I worked the clubs as a comedian—and some music halls." One night, he played a date at Stanmore with comedian Bob Monkhouse and ventriloquist Harry Illingworth. *God, you're pretty terrible!* Illingworth told Spooner. *But the material's great. I've got a Vic Oliver's Guest Night on Saturday and I can't make anything up and I'm a ventriloquist! What do I do on radio?* The outcome was that Spooner wrote material for the ventriloquist, who gave up his dummy, dropped the "Illing" from his name and became comedian Harry Worth. Spooner went on to write successful four and five-minute spots for Derak Roy, Arthur Haynes and other top radio performers. Instant success story, right? Wrong.

"I was working full-time in factories and as a window cleaner and whatever," says Spooner, "To write ten minutes of original jokes for a comedian on **Workers' Playtime** used to take me forever and I was lucky if I got £12 for it. I decided this wasn't a very good way of making a living. But then ITV started and Harry Worth did a show called **Val Parnell's Startime** and they were paying £40 a sketch, which was marvellous. Then they started a police drama series called **Murder Bag**, which turned into **No Hiding Place**.

"In those days, when ITV started, I think they found scriptwriters a bit like pressgangs found sailors. I'm sure they went out and hit the nearest passer-by over the head. Nobody knew what they were doing. I mean, **Murder Bag** and **No Hiding Place** used to go out live. Sometimes we might be running five minutes early and, another time, five minutes late. It was extraordinary to get in the last line *The Butler did it!* smack before the commercials without putting in an interlude. My progression really, was from writing four and five minute sketches on things like **The Arthur Haynes Show** and **Val Parnell's Startime** to things like **Tell It To The Marines**, which was a half-hour comedy show from which came **The Army Game**.

"**Tell It To The Marines** was script-edited by John Junkin and Terry Nation, who used to be writing partners. By that time, I'd got myself an agent at Associated London Scripts, which was an agency formed by Eric Sykes, Ray Galton, Alan Simpson and Spike Milligan. They had a secretary called Beryl Vertus, who went on to greater things. Johnny Speight had an office there, too. At that time, radio still hadn't died and there were **The Floggitts** with Elsie & Doris Waters (which Terry Nation was writing) and **Life With The Lyons**. I did a stint on **Life With The Lyons**. I suppose it was a Golden Era, when no-one really knew what they were doing. I'd gone from doing a small sketch into doing a longer sketch with a studio audience and then deciding that, if I was doing a half-hour and the only thing I really found difficult was making it funny, why not do a half-hour that wasn't funny? It must be easier. I did **Coronation Street** for a while: the last episode I did was number 88."

Around this time, he also met Gerry Anderson at a party. "Johnny Speight was writing a feature-film for Gerry—I think it was a comedy, but it never got made. At that time, Gerry had done **Four Feather Falls** and **Supercar** and I met him at Johnny Speight's party. We got chatting and he said *We're going to do another series of Supercar*. There were about ten episodes, mostly written by a couple called Hugh and Martin Woodhouse, but I wrote about three. By this time, Gerry was working for Law Grade. And Lew suddenly said *Oh no, we won't do Supercar. Do another show*. So the first scripts I wrote for Gerry were for the **Supercar** series that was never made.

"I suppose Gerry taught me to think in pictures rather than dialogue. I was writing like Terence Rattigan or Somerset Maugham. I was thinking like the plot progression of an actual story and Gerry would never accept those sort of stories. Well, he might, but I'd have to sell them to him in another way. Gerry would always say *Tell me four things*. It was exactly the same way as Hitchcock worked: he listed the magic moments of his film and then gave them to his scriptwriter. Alan Fennell and I did most of

Fireball XL-5. Alen was never a scriptwriter per se. He was always into comics and was editor of *Girl or Eagle* or something and turned out comic strips and Gerry thought very much in terms of comic strips.

"When Garry started on puppets, his contention was that you could do a better show if you thought in terms of stills rather than action. On **Fireball**, you had to say to him *These are the four sequences*. Very often, (special effects supervisor) Derek Meddings would say something like *We can do this marvellous thing where something goes down into a volcano and the whole thing blows up and lava comes out*. And that moment would be enough to justify a story. You'd have, say, an exploding volcano, the disintegration of a submarine and two other spectacular scenes end, once you'd sold Garry those four moments, he'd say *That's it. Make up a story where they happen*."

Spooner says he never found scripting for puppets difficult, because he never thought of them as puppets. "On film, you can do anything," he says: "With three cuts, you can make a puppet walk through a door. You can't do that if it's (an electronic) television camera. Doing a Gerry Anderson puppet series was less restricting than doing a live-action **Arthur Haynes Show**, because Arthur Haynes couldn't do as much as the puppets. He had to keep in range of the (electronic) cameras as they pushed and pulled them about whereas, with a film camera, you can stop and do anything. I remember I wrote a fight for the puppets once—with punches—and Gerry said *That's impossible!* but then he thought about it and they did it and it worked. The restriction was that to get 15 seconds of fight took an enormous amount of time, because there were so many cuts. That was the limitation."

But weren't puppets a come-down after writing for the immensely popular and high-rating **Arthur Haynes Show**?

"Oh no," says Spooner. "I never think—ever—in terms of *That's beneath my dignity!* If ATV phoned me up tomorrow and said *Will you write three episodes of Crossroads, please?* then, if I had the time, I would. I'm not Dennis Potter—although I'm not so sure Dennis Potter wouldn't write **Crossroads**. I don't believe you can decide what is beneath or above your dignity because, if you look back in time, all the things that have been knocked off quickly are the things that remain. I mean, Charles Dickens was the Peter Ling (co-creator of **Crossroads**) of his day. He knocked out a chapter of *Pickwick Papers* on schedule for a magazine. He didn't say *I am going to write a great novel*. I'm sure Shakespeare would be on **Coronation**





Street if he were alive today because, for a start, he wrote in television terms. People say *Oh, it's not classic writing if you're doing Charlie's Angels because you have to do a hook and manipulate a story!* But Shakespeare *always* wrote hooks. The style of *Hamlet* is the hook—the ghost and everything. Shakespeare *always* started off with a hook and he *always* followed what has become a television shape.

"In the cinema, the things that were knocked out in the 1930s and 1940s are the ones that have the lasting quality because, apart from anything else, they capture the time. If you sit down and say *I am going to write a masterpiece* then any critical acclaim is not likely to have the lasting quality of, say, Charlie Chaplin who was making two films a day. Even now, in terms of television, people remember the most extraordinary shows of a long time ago which weren't really appreciated at the time."

One show which has certainly lasted is a cheap children's series which started in 1963: **Doctor Who**. Dennis Spooner was asked to write some of the earlier episodes and became script-writer for a time. He says that one reason he has written widely for television but has never written a novel is "maybe my inferiority complex raising its head. Television and plays are always English-as-she-is-spoke as opposed to English as it is written. The fact that my grammar is appalling is an asset in dramatised work whereas, if you write a book, it becomes a sweat because suddenly you're not writing how you know people speak."

"When I was script-editor on **Doctor Who**, the BBC decided they would heighten the standard of television writing by offering a writer's job to anybody who got a First in English at Oxford or Cambridge. So they had all these guys walking around on contract and assigned them to all the script-editors. I'm sitting there writing **Doctor Who** and suddenly I get two Dons who know everything there is to know about English grammar. So they get next week's script and say *Can we re-write this one?* So I said *Sure*—at least it got them out of my hair. So, three days later, they came back with this beautifully-bound script which I read and which did not have a single grammatical mistake in it and it was so... Well, I handed it out to the cast and the actors nearly collapsed and died on the spot. It was terrible. It was unspeakable. But what do you do with them. We didn't use it, of course. It takes a lot of work to be able to write as bad as people speak."

One of Spooner's more unusual scripts for **Doctor Who** was *The Dalek Master Plan*, which he co-wrote with Terry Nation. ▶



"It came about," says Spooner, "because they wanted a 13-part series and Terry didn't want to write 13 parts. I was script-editor and, during the meeting, he said *Well, let's write some together* and I think he wrote seven and I wrote six. One of Terry's favourite anecdotes is about a television writer who ended an episode on a cliffhanger which it was completely impossible to get out of. So, when we decided to write *The Dalek Master Plan*, we had a vague idea it was going to be a sort of chase through time and we decided to try alternate episodes end catch each other out by ending episodes with un-get-out-of-able cliffhangers. So it became a total joke and we had a great time. I think at the end of one episode someone was literally in this pit which it was impossible to get out of and, when the next episode started, she was somewhere else. I don't think anybody complained. We just tried to see what we could get away with."

One of the reasons Terry Nation did not want to write 13 *Doctor Who* episodes was that he had been asked to write six scripts for the ITC series *The Saint*. After working on *The Saint*, Nation then became story-editor on ITC's new series *The Baron* and he phoned Dennis Spooner up to ask "Are you going to stay on *Doctor Who*?" Spooner's reply was: "No, I think I've had enough," so Nation offered him the chance to write 10 scripts for *The Baron*. When that

series ended and Nation left, ITC wanted another adventure series and asked Spooner what he wanted to do. The answer was **The Amazing Incredible Wilson**.

"He was a character in the *Wizard* comic," says Spooner. "He won every race in the Olympics and God knows what else. They traced him back and he was 175 years old because he'd found some special diet in the Yorkshire Moors. I mean, it was **The Six Million Dollar Man**, but years before. The trouble was we couldn't get the tv rights. By that time, Lew Grade had heard what we were trying to do. He'd got a bit fed up with ordinary heroes too and thought the only thing to do was go into the area of superheroes. So I thought—it was *Lost Horizon* really—you have three agents crash in Shangri-La end, when they come back to normal life, something's obviously happened. That was the format of **The Champions**."

"It sold in America, though it wasn't as successful as *The Saint* or *Danger Man*. We had an American advisor on *The Champions* because we were showing it in America. He was also the advisor on *The Six Million Dollar Man* and I saw whole chunks of *The Champions* in... I mean, *The Champions* could do everything that *Six Million Dollar Man* could do, but I was about 15 years before my time."

The American advisor (who worked on *The*

Avengers) was not, according to Spooner, a direct censor: he was someone with whom to liaise on certain points. "The most obvious one," Spooner says, "is that you can't have a hero say to the girl *You go to bed now and I'll knock you up in the morning*. It's acceptable in English, but it has a double-meaning in America. There's a lot like that. They also have so many pressure groups in America and he was just as well versed on what was acceptable. He didn't say *You MUST do this*. He tended to say *It would be better if...* And we were very interested in that, because British television has never been able to pay its way (in high-budget adventure series). The price of an episode is always more than you can ever recoup here in terms of advertising. We need the rest of the world to subsidise the standard of our television." ●

In part 2 of this interview, next month, Dennis Spooner talks about his work on Jason King, Doomwatch, The Professionals, the un-made Avengers movie and much more.



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Enter the World of Pure Magic! The latest advertising slogan to announce another step forward for Walt Disney Productions. Last November, the company officially entered the video market, releasing 16 feature films and 4 cartoon compilations on video cassette. With the consistently low rental charges, the new programme will, I'm sure, prove just as popular with the consumer as the Disney 8mm package films have over the last twelve years.

My view of the Disney home movies is one of admiration. The picture and sound quality has always been nothing short of superb. With skilful editing, these extracts are, in most cases, beyond comparison, and it's nice to see that a recent addition to the series was *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* from *Fantasia*. The only problem with these films has always been their running time. Apart from an occasional special, Disney have given us nothing over 8 minutes, and the end title always seemed to flicker into view far too soon, interrupting a variety of Disney characters from *Mary Poppins* to *Bambi*.

The bad news is that as far as the latter goes, we won't be able to see much more of them in the new video series either. With *Mary Poppins* and *Bambi*, the wait for video will be a long one. One 8mm clip however, entitled *Donald Duck in the High Andes*—an excellent short—does appear with the complete film in the new format.

In fact, this particular video called in a most spectacular fashion *Saludos Amigos*, is the only vintage Disney film to have been chosen for use on our television sets. It lasts 43 minutes and was made in 1943. But there are no great forties classics to accompany it, even if the promotional cassette screened at the launch party in October, teased us with tantalising glimpses of the wonderful world of Disney animation.

The atmosphere at the launch, apart from being one of pleasure for the new venture, was laden with the Disney company's manic pre-occupation with—dare I say it—*PIRACY*. If we heard the word once, we heard it a hundred times—over cocktails, between videos and from guest speakers. No other film company, with the possible exception of Universal MCA, are so concerned over illegal copying of their product. It was fine all the time customers contented themselves with 8mm extracts, after all, how many people do you know, have the facilities to pirate 8mm films. But with the video boom, it's a different story. All the Disney cassette boxes are clearly labeled, 'For Rental Only Not For Sale'.

Fair enough! No company could hope to

The Disney Tapes

Report by Richard Holliss



withstand a successful rip-off merchant and anyway why should the Joe Bloggs of this world be allowed to make a living out of other people's property and hard work. The trouble is, that this attitude immediately assumes that anybody who wants to buy a copy of their favourite Disney feature film must be a crook.

The other irony here, was pointed out at the Disney meeting by one of the invited guests. "How come Disney and Universal are suing Sony in America for actually selling video machines and yet at the same time, issuing video tapes for the home video market?" A good question, and one that director of Walt Disney Telecommunications, Terry Byrne did his best to answer. Although I suspect that even he was unsure of a reasonable explanation.

The directors of Thorn EMI and the Rank Organisation who were also present, were likewise confused by this one, and hereby hangs a tale—the outcome of all this it seems, is that Disney policy forbids the consumer from being in a position of ownership with Disney Videos. For anyone who is then able to make illegal copies will have a freedom that will not be tolerated.

A disappointing aspect is that most of the releases are not the best examples of Disney film making and I'm sure that there are even some that have been issued with ulterior motives in mind. Let's first examine the list of titles. With the exception of *Mickey's Golden Jubilee*, *Saludos Amigos*, *Superstar Goofy* and the three *Cartoon Festivals*, which are certainly worth having (I mean *renting*), this is what we have on offer.

The Best of Walt Disney's True Life Adventures (1975). This is a well put together compilation of the most outstanding moments from the Disney Wildlife films of the fifties, although many of the chosen

sequences have already appeared on television, in the Disneytime programme for example and as I recall, the fabulous *Waterbirds* conclusion, almost in its entirety on the Philip Jenkinson, James Algar *Film Night* interview in 1967.

Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier (1955). This title is the feature-length version which is made up of edited highlights of the original American tv series. It has already been on BBC television.

Freaky Friday, a new type of Disney comedy that while it may be good wholesome family entertainment, hardly constitutes in my opinion the symbol of film-making for which Walt Disney stood.



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Island at the Top of the World (1978). An interesting excursion with Donald Sinden and Jules Verne, but a sad reminder of what it could have been, when one reflects Disney's excellent *In Search of the Castaways*.

The Love Bug, certainly a huge box office success, as all the sequels have proved, although this original Dean Jones extravaganza has had a good run at the cinema by now.

The Million Dollar Duck (1971). Well I'll go to the back of the class if I'm wrong, but I think the Disney people were wise to rent out this title, because I certainly don't think people would spend between £75 and £40 to buy it.

Pete's Dragon (1978). Very nice and I'm rather surprised it made video so quickly. I'm sure the studio still has a lot of mileage in this one, although let's be honest, another *Mary Poppins* it certainly is not!

Swiss Family Robinson (1960). An excellent title with a good box-office history.

That Darn Cat (1965). A sadly forgotten Disney film, but one that is certainly worth a look at, as to buying it...

The Black Hole (1979). As most of the profits on this film disappeared into a black hole, I was not surprised by its appearance on video. It will be interesting to see what sort of reception a re-issue would get. Technically, I think it was superb, but the acting—oh dear!

Treasure Island (1950). A great choice for video. One of the most successful re-issues was in 1971 when it teamed up with *Sleeping Beauty*. If only Disney could have reissued its type with the latest *Sleeping Beauty* re-release, instead of the dreadful 1969 tv effort, *Pablo and the Dancing Chihuahua*.

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1954). Again a great title, a classic, but one that has already cropped up on television and

contrary to the studio's feelings, I imagine that a lot of video recorders were whirring last Christmas.

The World's Greatest Athlete (1973). The title sums it up. I am again convinced that hard cash would actually change hands for this one, let alone even bother to pirate it, unless of course, the buyer is a Jan Michael Vincent fan.

Finally, **Winnie-the-Pooh and the Honey Tree** (1965). A fabulous short, which has already appeared on British television. This particular tape also includes two Disney cartoons starring Donald Duck and Plüto.

So what do we make of the impressive selection? Well, unfortunately not much. Why

the fuss then to rent only? Of course, if the titles had consisted of some of the great classics, I would wholeheartedly agree with Messrs Disney and Co for their protective attitude, especially with regard to pirating but not otherwise. I am also wondering if Disney will withdraw certain video titles as re-releases come round to the cinemas. A habit that constantly irritates users of the Rank 16mm film library.

No one who loves film, wants to see an end to the cinema as entertainment, especially Walt Disney Productions. It is however inevitable that something like this will happen in the near future, just as cinema itself almost wiped out music hall and stage shows in the twenties and thirties. Therefore, let's have a few Disney animated classics on video, it would I'm sure help to stamp out piracy, on the grounds that most people would prefer a decent first generation tape, not just copies. This was after all, a view expressed by one of the Disney guest speakers himself, at the video launch.

The final question must surely be, "What would Walt himself have thought about all this?" Well as far as the Sony debate in America is concerned he probably would have investigated legal rights to market video machines long before now, thus saving a lot of courtroom hassles. With an undaunting pioneering spirit for new ideas, he would have welcomed video, in the same way as he did television in the fifties, and I suspect regarding the video tape business, he would have surprised us all with perhaps *Dumbo* at the head of the launch, (it has been on American tv) and a programme of titles backing it up, which I don't think would have been in any way similar to the twenty video titles that we are now in a privileged position to rent.



GHOST

Review by Phil Edwards



Well, we all really had high hopes for *Ghost Story*, the new film from John Irvin (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and *Dogs of War*) based on Peter Straub's best-selling novel. Unfortunately, it's another great disappointment for fans of the fantastic film and in many ways its failure as a horror/ghost movie is reminiscent of the disastrous *The Shining*.

It certainly starts well enough. A young man, David Wanderley played by Craig Wasson walks into his bedroom and observes the sleeping sheet covered shape of

his lover. He approaches her and gently pulls the sheet from her face. She turns over to reveal that her face is horribly decomposed, a rotting skeletal visage so horrifying that Wanderley falls back in shock, smashes through a plate glass window and plummets to his death twenty nine stories below. It's a stunning opening, made all the more horrific by the splendid special effects of the ever-reliable Albert Whitlock. I guess the fact that Wanderley is also totally naked makes for some kind of first in a sequence like that and set me thinking that perhaps here we were in



STORY



for a film of some originality. But this train of thought was soon dispelled and it quickly became apparent that **Ghost Story** was going to be little more than a tedious exercise in Hollywood schlock aimed at middle class audience and tastes.

Ghost Story is the tale of four old men, known as The Chowder Society. Once a week they get together to frighten each other with the most horrific ghost stories they can concoct. Then one by one they meet their own ghastly deaths. It turns out that years before they had all been responsible for the

death of a young woman and it is her apparition in its various forms which has returned to wreak revenge for the dead. Not having read Straub's original novel I can't compare the two, though a colleague who has assures me that apart from the usual telescoping of characters and events that is common in film adaptations of chunky novels the film is remarkably faithful to the storyline of the book if not the spirit.

The basic problem at the root of **Ghost Story's** failings is that what may have worked as the printed word doesn't necessarily





Opposite: Alice Krige as Eva Galk who disintegrates into the avenging ghost, make-up by Dick Smith. Above: Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Fred Astaire, John Houseman and the late Melvyn Douglas portray members of the Chowder Society, an organisation which specialises in telling ghost stories, until one of their tales becomes out of control. Below: Alice Krige as Eva Galli, the beautiful but lethal ghost.

translate well to the screen and the overall effect is bitty and therefore unsatisfying. The casting of the members of The Chowder Society is interesting, though the effect of seeing Fred Astaire, John Houseman, Douglas Fairbanks Jr and the late Melvyn Douglas going through their paces and finding themselves in perilous and usually horrific situations often makes for a cheap laugh as they dodder through their roles. An exception is Melvyn Douglas's death scene, which when viewed with the knowledge that he died soon after filming adds an almost unbearably poignancy to an otherwise trite and clichéd sequence.

Current West End stage fave Alice Krige turns in an interesting performance as Eva Galli the avenging ghost, through her nervous twitchiness in the role gave me the feeling that she may very well be a one performance actress in the same way as Glenda Jackson. A couple of torrid love scenes with Don Wanderley, played by Craig Wasson, look like they strayed in from another film although their effect after what we have seen in the opening sequence gives the viewer a sense of apprehension.

Perhaps *Ghost Story's* greatest assets are the work contributed by Al Whitlock and make-up supremo Dick Smith, though interestingly much of Smith's work ended on the cutting room floor. A recent issue of *Cinefantastique* reveals many of the deletions in this area and perhaps the most extraordinary image is one of the apparitions of Eva's face as nothing more than a gaping ugly maw of a mouth really whets the appetite of what *Ghost Story might* have been.

How much of *Ghost Story's* bitterness is the result of heavy re-editing is anybody's guess, though some of the rather abrupt cutting would indicate that an attempt was made late in the day to make the film pacier and more horrific. Where *Ghost Story* goes wrong I feel is that it is an "honorable" attempt to make a horror film palatable for a general audience. Where it fails in that area is that we have seen it all before, if not within the context of a ghost story a genre which has never been particularly successful. So the film is tricked

out with conventional slash movie imagery and all the typical illogicalities of that genre. Despite its big budget and reputable source material there is the usual plethora of idiotic happenings such as people venturing into darkened rooms where it is obvious danger waits and that old chestnut of "You wait here in this haunted old house where we know there is a murdering spirit and I'll go and get help." It's enough to make you groan out loud at such obvious devices, something that Kubrick was also at fault with in *The Shining*. It makes me think that directors like Kubrick and Irvin have never seen a slash movie or any horror films for that matter and feel that what they are doing is original. However this ignorance of form and style is no excuse for *Ghost Story's* greatest lapse, not just in logic but in continuity. As Fred Astaire and Craig Wasson are investigating Eva Galli's haunted house, Wasson crashes through the rotten stairs, bringing down with him a fair chunk of lumber. Lying injured with a broken ankle, he watches as Astaire climbs the same stairs, apparently walking on thin air. For a minute I thought that Fred must be a ghost too, but no—it's just that old Hollywood schlock shining through.

To return to Whitlock's work, the one thing that can be said in the film's favour is that it looks simply beautiful thanks to his stunning matte paintings which often give it a superbly ethereal feel.

With *Ghost Story* proving such a disappointment it looks like we'll have to wait for the Summer for the latest batch of big fantasy films to open. With both *Halloween 2* and now *Ghost Story* being so disappointing it feels like it will be a long wait.



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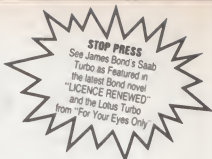
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SUSPERIA

Feature by Martin Coxhead

Film distributors EMI were definitely taking a gamble when they opened a particular film in December 1977. It was almost unheard of that an Italian horror film with a cast of relative unknowns and a "cult" director should open in the West End at the ABC Shaftsbury Avenue, one of London's most prestigious cinemas. That particular cinema was chosen because it was one of the few that could accommodate the film's four-track magnetic sound system.

The film was Dario Argento's *Suspiria* and it proved to be a total assault on the eyes and ears, the like of which has not been equalled in horror cinema. The critics, surprisingly, quite liked it. "Don't think, just panic," said the *Time Out* critic while the man from *Film Illustrated* came more to the point with "The most terrifying film I have seen in more than a decade." Alexander Walker of the *Evening Standard* got it wrong when he said the title referred to the heavy constant breathing sounds which are heard throughout the film, the title in fact is the Italian word for "sigh" or



"whisper", something the film has in abundance. Had EMI been right to take the gamble? The money they raked in at the box office said yes. But who was this Argento person, and from where did the film spring?

Dario Argento was in films writing spaghetti westerns like *Five Man Army* and co-wrote Sergio Leone's epic *Once Upon A Time In The West* with Bernardo Bertolucci who went on to direct, among other things, *Last Tango In Paris*. Argento's first directorial credit was *The Bird With the Crystal Plumage* in 1973, a thriller/mystery starring Tony Musante. The film was a success at the European box office and was consolidated with *Cat of Nine Tails* with James Franciscus, Karl Malden and Catherine Spaak, and *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* with Michael Brandon and Mimsy Farmer. Although Argento's murder thrillers were a success on the Continent they received poor distribution and bad reviews in Britain and America. Then, in 1976, Argento's flamboyant style and sense of off-beat horror were used to the full in *Deep*

Red (*Profondo Rosso*). Argento went heavily for the horror element in this thriller starring David Hemmings as a pianist involved in the hunt for the killer of a psychic. As Hemmings follows his leads the killer is always seemingly one step ahead. The murders are graphic and have impact; a woman is drowned in a bath of boiling water, a man has his teeth smashed out against a marble fireplace before having a dagger rammed through his neck. And remember, this was before the *Friday The 13th*-type slash movies. But *Deep Red* also had a *Sleuth*-like twist at the end involving the identity of the murderer. Of all his films, *Deep Red* is perhaps Argento's most satisfying, and several of the elements used in this film would also be used on *Suspiria*.

The screenplay of *Suspiria*, written with his wife Daria Nicolodi whom he met on the set of *Deep Red* and who also starred in the late Mario Bava's *Shock*, dwelt on the supernatural and the story of a young American ballet student, Susy Banyon, going



to the famed Academy of Friberg. As she waits at the door a young girl runs out in terror.

The girl goes to stay with a friend and what follows is a totally heart-stopping sequence which is probably one of the finest set-piece murders ever filmed. As the girl stands in the bathroom she sees two yellow eyes peering at her through the darkness. A hand smashes through the window and drags her out on to the balcony. What follows, is gripping and horrific and results in two deaths.

Remarkably, for such a graphically violent and gory scene, it was left untouched by the Censor.

The main criticism levelled at the screenplay is that it is mostly made up of excellent set-pieces, as above, with only a thin connecting thread of plot linking them together. The Academy was run in the Fifteenth Century by Elana Markos, an infamous Black Witch, as psychiatrist Udo Kier tells Susy Banyon. The fact that she still lives is used by Argento in his horrific climax.

True, there is an occasional lapse of logic or strange motivation but the film works so well that you don't realise this until afterwards. As the man from *Time Out* said, "Don't think, just panic".

Argento used in the past many technical gadgets for his films, for example a high speed camera taking over three thousand frames a second or a fibre optic lens in *The Bird With the Crystal Plumage*, which is used to go down Tony Musante's throat as he screams. But for *Suspiria* the high-tech techniques went beyond just a gimmick. For the visual style, cinematographer Luciano Tavoli used mostly bounce lighting, that is light reflected from mirrors onto the set to give a softened but intense effect. Many of the interior sets of the Academy had heavy velvet drapes adorning the walls due to Giuseppe Basson's designs. For the effect Argento wanted, he didn't use normal colour film but out-dated Kodak stock which gave a glowing, almost oppressive, colour. When used in conjunction with Tavoli's lighting and

Basson's garish sets the film almost bleeds colour. The scenes throb from the screen, at times tinting the interior of the cinema so red you could probably develop photographs in Row G. Another factor in the film's success was the pounding, insistent soundtrack. For the music Argento chose the Italian rock band Goblin, who had also scored *Deep Red*. The music they produced is gentle and repetitive but with an excellent sense of menace in it's twinkling chimes. The music is heard for most of the films' 98 minute running time. After *Suspiria*, Goblin went on to produce music for George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (which Argento co-produced), *Contamination* and *Blue Holocaust*. Realising that the ears counted as much as the eyes for sensory impact, Argento mixed the film in four-track magnetic sound, surely the most involving and engrossing of the modern sound systems. Although only a few prestige cinemas in the major cities would see (and hear) it in such a system it is a great credit to the film that when heard "flat" it still



packs a tremendous punch, proving that the four-track system is not just a gimmick but rather the cherry on the cake. He also took the unusual step of recording the music before a foot of film had been shot, and had the cast act to it in the studio thus emphasising the mood he was trying to achieve. The casting, as with many Italian horror films, was international. Jessica Harper (from Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* and currently starring in *Shock Treatment*) was chosen to play Susy Banyon, a good choice since she had the perfect amount of doe-eyed innocence to make audiences uneasy when she starts to wander around the Academy corridors alone. Stefania Casini, an Italian starlet, appeared as the student who befriends Susy when all the other students seem hostile. American Joan Bennett, German Udo Kier and Dutch Rudolf Schündler also cropped up in cameo roles.

But where Argento really found problems was in the casting of two particular roles. One was the mute menacing servant at the

Academy, and the other the still living but almost decomposing witch, Elana Markos. As Argento said at the time; *"I wanted to use someone from an asylum but the authorities wouldn't let me. But then I found this man at the Post Office"*. The actor (?) who finally takes the part gives it the relevant aura of malevolence, being a lumbering cumbersome giant with horrible slab-like teeth. For Elana Markos Argento knew what he wanted; *"I wanted somebody incredibly old, the oldest person I had ever seen"*. The actress, rumoured to be 102 at the time of filming, appears in the final scenes. Susy Banyon cowers behind a drape behind which is a beautiful glass peacock (a reference to *The Bird With the Crystal Plumage*) and, taking a glass dagger from the tail of the bird she confronts Markos.

Suspiria opened in 1977 to colossal grosses in Italy (where it took more than both *Jaws* and the remake of *King Kong*) and good box office in the rest of the world. But dealing with a horror film, and an Italian one at that,

seemed to embarrass Twentieth Century-Fox who released it in the United States. Not wishing to have their name associated with it, but realising they had a potential winner on their hands, they exhumed a tiny subsidiary company, International Classics Releasing, which they had not used since the 50s, and circulated the film under that company name.

When it came to Britain there were, as to be expected, censor cuts, but luckily not severe ones. The scenes trimmed were; Stefania Casini's death after she is chased into a room of wire rolls by a killer, the explicit throat-slitting was cut there and another (very similar to one in Lucio Fulci's *The Beyond*) where David (Flavio Bucci), the blind pianist at the Academy, is attacked by his own Alsatian guide-dog. With this scene the censor took exception to some close-ups of hunks of flesh being torn from his chest. But interestingly there is a scene in the Italian cinema version which is not in any other at all. Not a question of censorship, just the fact that in all export prints it is missing. The sequence

in question comes at the end when Susy is fleeing from the burning, disintegrating Academy. She is suddenly chased by the bleeding, lumbering servant. As they run into one of the reception halls a whole sheet of glass falls from one of the skylights and totally bisects the servant down the middle, making both halves fall away and having his heart and organs tumble over the floor. At least that's one missing scene which for once we cannot blame Mr Ferman but seemingly Salvatore Argento, Dario's father and executive producer of the film. So *Suspiria* was a hit, so much so in Japan that *Deep Red* was re-released as *Suspiria Part 2*.

In 1979 Argento made *Inferno*, a semi-sequel to *Suspiria* and part of a proposed trilogy. The story, dealing with the Mothers of Whispers, Darkness and Tears and their respective houses in Germany (the Friberg Academy), New York and Rome, was as scant as *Suspiria*, but the visuals and beautiful atmosphere as well as some moments of gripping horror made it truly memorable.

Argento's mentor, Mario Bava, controlled the special effects and it was to be his last film before his death. With *Inferno*, Argento used a quiet, lyrical score by Keith Emerson which showed that he was now confident enough not to have wall-to-wall Goblin to cover any deficiencies of the film. It was distributed by 20th Century-Fox. Or rather it wasn't. Although a huge success in Europe the film was barely publicised in this country and vanished within a fortnight. In America, Fox couldn't be bothered to release it at all.

Having co-produced the hugely successful *Dawn of the Dead* and doing some occasional work for Italian television Argento is now preparing another film, but reportedly not the third part of the trilogy. Until more details are forthcoming we'll just have to content ourselves with repeated showings of the *Suspiria* video cassette which EMI released last year and has been selling well. (Alexander Walker makes the same mistake in his review on the back of the box).

Suspiria paid off the gamble with



handsome dividends. It made a lot of money at the box-office, and is still on the late night circuit and playing to large audiences. The video cassette, at forty pounds, has sold well. *Deep Red*, still unseen in this country, could do the same sort of business if handled properly by a company willing to take a gamble.

How about it, EMI? ●

Suspiria

(1977)

Jessica Harper (as Susy Banyon), Stefania Casini (Sara), Joan Bennett (Madame Blanc), Alida Valli (Tanner), Flavio Bucci (David), Udo Kier (Psychiatrist), Rudolf Schündler (Doctor). Directed by Dario Argento. Screenplay by Dario Argento & Daria Nicolodi. Produced by Claudio Argento. Executive Producer Salvatore Argento. Director of Photography Luciano Tavoli. Art Directors Maurizio Garrone, David Basson & Enrico Fiorentino. Special Effects Germano Natali. Designed by Giuseppe Basson. Edited by Franco Fraticelli. Music by Goblin with the collaboration of Dario Argento.

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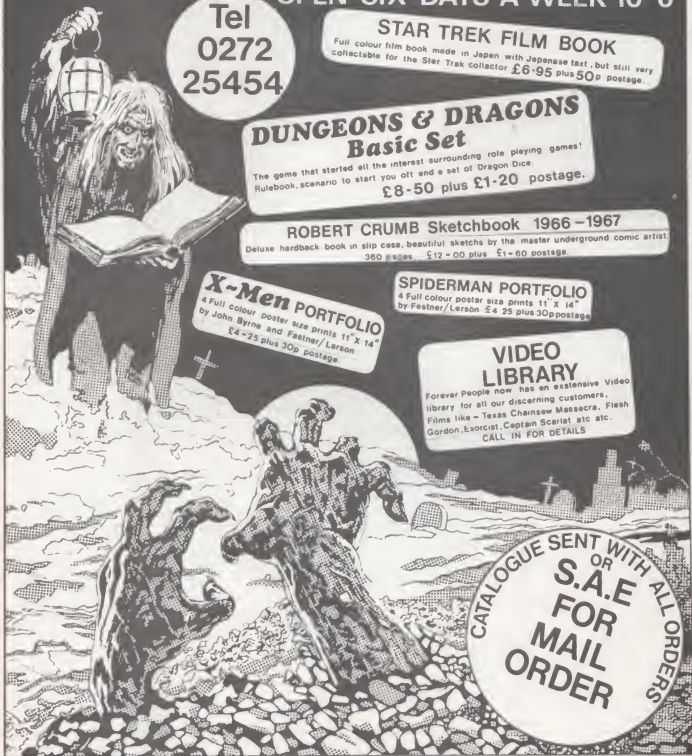
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of

FAB
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FIFTIES
POSTERS

FEW
WILL ARGUE
THAT THE 1950s REP-
RESENTED THE GOLDEN AGE OF
SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES IN THE DAYS
B.S.W. (BEFORE STAR WARS). IN THIS, THE SECOND
PART OF OUR LOOK AT THE GREAT POSTERS OF THE FIF-
TIES, WE COVER SOME OF THE BEST-REMEMBERED FILMS OF THAT
DECADE . . . AND SOME OF THE MORE OBSCURE ONES, TOO.

From the depths of the sea...
A TIDAL WAVE
OF TERROR!

ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS

FROM TIME UNBORN...A HIDEOUS SHE-THING!



TER
FROM
YE
5,0

JOYCE HOLDEN

HOW DID IT GET HERE ?

HOWARD HAWKS'
Astounding FILM

THE THING

CHRISTIAN BRYE
STARRING



THE SCIENCE-MONSTER WHO WOULD DESTROY THE WORLD!



MGM PRESENTS *The Invisible Boy*

ROBBY THE ROBOT

BLACK...
see him with
BLOOD!
That's why he

UNCUT!
SHOWN
EXACTLY AS
FILMED!

RICHARD DENNING PRESENTS

OR
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ROCKET THROUGH SPACE ON MAN'S GREATEST

ADVENTURE!

RIDERS TO THE STARS

IN COLOR BY UNITED ARTISTS CORPORATION

Starring
WILLIAM HERRBERT RICHARD LUNDICAN MARSHALL CARLSON
MARTHA HYER · DAWN ADDAMS
Produced by Ivan TORS · Directed by Richard CARLSON
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You'll SEE

the breathtaking sight of earth as seen from outer space!

You'll SEE

the fantastic "nuclear attack" as rocket and meteor crash head-on in a space-splitting collision!

You'll SEE

man and equipment float in air, trapped where there is no gravity—no up or down!

You'll SEE

the terrifying crash of 120's — 12 times the pull of gravity as the rocket zooms from earth!

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the Space Vikings Of The Future—hurting toward the far reaches of the universe!

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We defy you not to get a genuine case of the horrors when you see

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DON'T BE ASHAMED TO SCREAM! IT HELPS RELIEVE THE TENSION!

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ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE

JOHN AGAR · JOHN HOYT · JUNE KENNEY

Produced and Directed by BERT I. GORDON
Screenplay by JAMES WARDENBARGER · Story by JOHN L. GORDON

CREEPSHOW

A Tony Crawley interview with Romero's right-hand man, partner and co-producer Richard P. Rubinstein.





This is the year we've been waiting for. The year we can expect the very best—hopefully, the definitive—in American horror films. The first of many collaborations between the two top stars of their trades. Movie-maker George A. Romero and novelist Stephen King. This is the year of *Creepshow*... To be followed, soon enough, by their version of King's international best-seller, *The Stand*... and, so we're told, an original Romero-King 3-D movie to come before the middle of the decade.

"Me?" says Richard P. Rubinstein, Romero's business partner and producer. "I just take pride in putting it together. Letting the two of them just do what they do."

Romero and Rubinstein are partners in the company they call Laurel Entertainment Inc. It's an association which has to date, resulted in three movies, *Martin* (1977), *Zombie—Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *KnightRiders* (1981), some seventeen hours of sports and entertainment tv specials, the importing of various Euro-films (such as Robert Enrocco's *Le Secret*; 1974), arranging the financing and publishing of many books by such authors of Anthony Burgess, J.B. Priestley, Dick Gregory and, of course, Romero himself, and the release of the *Martin* and *Zombie* soundtrack albums.

Naturally, it is the movies which are the nub of Laurel's entertainment—and Romero's career. Cushioned, protected and exceedingly well-orchestrated by Rubinstein, a former Wall Street consultant, foreign salesman for movies, innovator of the location use of the then new portable tv (or video) cameras, and columnist for first video tape editor of *Filmmakers' Newsletter*. He is now President of Laurel, George's right hand.

"I started working in films with foreign sales agent, Irwin Shapiro, and his company, Films Around The World. He took me off to Cannes for the first time in 1970 and was sorta my Godfather in the business. For instance, on the first trip to Cannes, he didn't take me straight to the Carlton Hotel terrace but to see the Picasso ceramics... and then to the terrace. He had been representing George since *The Crazies* (1973), and introduced me to him.

"I was writing for the *Filmmakers' Newsletter* at the same time, mainly on video as I'd been interested in getting television out of the studio—I'd been walking around Ibiza for years with my portable video tape unit on my back doing home-movies. So I did this interview with George. We started talking... and we've been talking ever since.

"Basically, I think George recognised that while he had a comprehension of the business side, it wasn't his forte and not something he wanted to be involved with. I, on the other side, recognised what I call a creative prophet, and someone who needed help. George knew enough about business to get into trouble! And I'd say that if he was sitting here...

"It's very rare that you find the innate qualities of a business person in a creative person. The essence of the two usually don't combine in one person. It's more of a free-wheeling kinda thing you get from a creative person. I'm more logically orientated... Don't get me wrong. I don't see any dichotomy between business and creative. They're symbiotic. But out of the two together comes more than each individual can generate. And so it's been a comfortable division of labour between George and I.

They met in 1973. Romero had the immortal *Night of the Living Dead* under his belt and was, as he put it, "on the cusp of *The Crazies*." He had a cult following fuelled by those who could actually see the films anywhere. (*Living Dead* had survived a distribution mess and legal hassles and Laurel Entertainment now own the rights again; the 114,000 dollar classic is rumoured to have now grossed in excess of 50 million bucks!)

Beck then, though, Romero wasn't particularly regarded as anything other than a freaky Pittsburghian (I mean, Hymie—Pittsburg!) who got lucky. Rubinstein help put that right. They started together in television, Romero directing and Rubinstein producing, and occasionally trying his hand at directing those locally made specials. Rubinstein managed to arrange for them to be aired, prime time, right after the Monday football games on the various





Western affiliate stations of the mighty ABC network. The specials profiled superstars athletes in the main, most of whose names mean little to British sports fans, although two of them at least, O.J. Simpson and Kream Abdul Jabbar, have since got into movies. (Simpson was in *The Towering Inferno* among other films, and Jabbar took on Bruce Lee in his last film, and played himself in *Airplane*.)

The tv shows were of prime importance, though. "They gave us a corporate structure," explains Rubinstein, "money in the bank and a professional credibility on a national level." The next step was to do the same for Romero as a film-maker—and not just rationally, but globally.

"My function as a producer," adds Rubinstein, "is much more European in style than American. I don't get involved on a day-to-day basis. That's George's responsibility. I'm there on the set. I represent the clock ticking away... But I really have very little to say, unless there's a problem. I've done it all in setting the deal up. I am the deal-maker.

"We don't covet what each other does. I don't tell George how to direct his pictures. He doesn't tell me how to draw contracts. He doesn't look at the books and contracts. And I don't advise him how to cut our films. I see my job as providing George with the brush, palette, paint and canvas."

And now, with Stephen King, too.

That's an eldritch partnership, devoutly to be wished. And so far, from all reports from Pittsburg, all is going very well on the first of three, four, more Romero 'n' King trips, produced by Richard Rubinstein... the three musketeers of mayhem. All for one, and one for all—and the one, in Laurel corporate thinking, is always us. The audience.

To listen to Rubinstein, from Brooklyn, discussing his own inspirations and the plans of Romero, from Pittsburg, and King, from Maine, they all sound too good to be true. I just hope he's right...

Starburst: It seems a logical meeting of like-minds, but who or what first brought George and Stephen together?

Richard Rubinstein: Warner Brothers, actually! They had bought Steve's *Salem's Lot* and had developed four screenplays. One from Stirling Silliphant, others by Mike Nichols, Larry Cohen...

Mike Nichols?

Yes. Then, they turned around and saw *Love At First Bite* coming out and *Dracula* and all the other vampires coming and they said, "Hey, we're getting left behind!" Warner Brothers saw *Martin* and they said, "Oh, vampire in a small town... *Salem's Lot*, vampires in a small town!" So they picked up the phone and flew George and I out to California and said, "Hey you guys wanna go off for nine weeks to Maine and make *Salem's Lot*?" We said, "If you really are serious about doing it that way, we'd be interested in talking." And they picked up the phone again and called Steve and said, "Steve, whaddya think about George Romero directing *Salem's Lot*?" And he said, "It's the best thing I've heard from you guys in two years."

As it turned out they decided to go into television with it. They asked us if we wanted to do it that way and we said no. Tobe Hooper wound up doing it and it's a pretty good tv movie for what limitations you have there. In any event, that introduced us to Steve...

So Hollywood does have some uses for the out-of-town independents. I would have thought you would have run into each other at some convention someplace.

No, it took Hollywood to introduce us. Steve and George had acknowledged each other's work from way back, though. If you read the introduction to *Night Shift*, Steve acknowledges *Night of the Living Dead*... and we've been reading Steve King books for a long while.

We got to talking and realised that we wanted to work together. Steve had always been treated as a novelist by the studios. He'd got pigeon-holed like that, when he really wanted to write screenplays—and had written some. We read some that were never used and we said to ourselves, "Hey, Steve really knows how to write a screenplay! That decided us."

We said we wanted to do a couple of things together. Steve gave us his pick of everything that had not been committed to someone else. We picked *The Stand* as our longterm project. We chose that over *Dead Zone* and everything else that was available. We recognised it would be several years in the making... in the sense that it would take time in

scaling down that book into movie length.

Yeah, that's some colossal book!

Steve regards it as his *War and Peace*, okay?

That's a pretty good subtitle for what goes down in it. In Hollywood, the studios look at a book sideways, okay? And they say, "Jesus, howya gonna make a movie out of this, it's too thick!" Steve and George figured out exactly how to scale it down. Steve has finished the third draft of the screenplay. The first draft was 400 pages. The second was 300. The third is now 200. We're getting really down to a manageable length at this point.

This obviously means slashing a lot of the book—and the characters, or adding some of them together?

Well, there is a little bit of polemic in the centre section of the book that we've reduced. I don't think it's a question of reducing so much as translating. When you take something from one medium to another, it's not a question of being literal... but of maintaining the effect. In other words, I hate those conversations where somebody comes out of a movie and says, "oh they didn't do that scene..." okay?

"They left that one out!" To me, that is exactly the opposite of what the real point is. Which is: How do you maintain the aesthetic by translating the novel to the screenplay form. That's really all the trick is.

Agreed, but people, King's fans, have their favourite moment in a book, every bit as much as they do in a movie. So must King himself. So how does he manage the trick, vaulting the vast gulf between novelist and scenarist?

He's a fantastic scriptwriter! He's very objective. He and George had such a mutual respect for each other that's extraordinary. How they defer to each other on a creative level, back and forth, is a great process to watch. They're talking in a form of shorthand to some extent. They know basically what scares people! They are devoted to the basic experience of scaring people!... One of the basic emotions is anxiety, as well as love, hate, leugh... I'm dealing with it in the context of safe anxiety. It's not your boss yelling at you, "Hey, you did a crappy job!" There is a pressure that is, in a certain sense, self-influenced. But you know that at the end of the two hours, the lights go up and everybody walks out together.

Hitchcock characterised it best when he said,

"When you take that little baby and you go 'Boo!', and the kid laughs. He's not frightened. He knows he's gonna get a hug as well." That's really that edge that we're looking for. And it's also the mixing of wit and horror. I think that's what George does well. And Steve does it very, very well.

A difficult balance to achieve.

Oh sure. I observe, from the outside, a similarity in their work. No matter how absurd the situation is, their characters are believable characters, okay? They behave rationally. They go to the bathroom. They eat at McDonald's. They both build character identification in a movie genre that usually doesn't bother with it. I think that's what differentiates **Friday The 13th**—which strings together a number of effects—from George's films. The production manager could make a picture like **Friday The 13th**. He made the sequel, didn't he?

He could have made both... At the same time, we try not to forget the rollercoaster rides, okay? But we're also interested in making the movie... I was at a screening of a picture yesterday and somebody walked out saying, "What happened to the movie?" You know what I mean?

I know all too well.

Well, we're not that interested in the gross-out factor. We just try and make good pictures. That's the limit of the whole thing.

So we have George and Steve discovering that they are like-minded. What was the next step. How did **Creepshow** form itself into an eight-million dollar happening?

Creepshow is totally an original concept. **The Stand**, we recognised as going to be a long-term project, a substantial budget and we'd have to do a helluva lot in getting the credibility of getting that budget. In the short term, we wanted to work together. Steve made the suggestion of doing something on the style of the '50s comic books format. Keeping it true... He came up with the title **Creepshow**, which right away had

the producer side of me going click! click! click! title! buzz! *Fantastic!*

And what then, he went off and wrote it?

Steve has got, you know, a drawer full of short stories and ideas. Two of the **Creepshow** pieces are published in short story form—the one that is probably best known is **The Crate**. We liked the idea and Steve said, "Okay, I'll write a screenplay in two months! And in two months to the day, a screenplay was there. Six stories. Steve sees them as telegrams of terror. I really like that characterisation.

And Steve is acting in one, right?

Right. **The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill**.

He's the farmer who has a meteorite land on his property and think it's going to be his salvation. He'll be able to charge admission to people to come, touch this meteor. In fact, the people who touch it have another problem.

Dot, dot, dot, as they say?

(Laugh). Steve was also in **Knightriders**. Just a little cameo of a country redneck. He has a couple of lines. He says, "It's all a fake! Jousting on motorcycles is all a fake. They're all professionals with bloodbags in their mouths."

What's his new dialogue like?

Oh, Jordy Verrill is actually all silent of dialogue... I don't know if George will appear in a cameo or not. But the rest of the **Pittsburg** cast will, or are you revving up on this one?

No, we're casting a recognisable name cast. We're trying not to hold it against anyone that they have recognisable names!

You don't need major stars, anyway. You've got 'em with **Romero 'n' King**, together again for the first time! Right...! As we say, we're going for experience which generally means recognisable names. I don't believe there is any name in the world that guarantees box-office. I think that's been proved too often. You can have great names... and have a terrible picture. And nobody will buy it. We have good

people... Hal Holbrook, Adrienne Barbeau, Fritz Weaver, Leslie Nielsen, Carrie Nye and Viveca Lindfors.

And who's paying for all this?

Creepshow is being financed by United Artists Theatre Circuit (UATC) which is different from United Artists, which Transamerica has now sold to MGM. So it's nothing to do with the new son-of-CIC outfit, UIP.

UATC have a distribution company, a subsidiary called United Film. They handled **Dawn of the Dead** in the States and **Knightriders**—which is handled by the other United Artists abroad.

*I knew I shouldn't have asked... Six stories in **Creepshow**, does that mean six locations, a bunch of re-usable, adaptable sets, or what?*

Half the picture is sets. One beach sequence on the coast of Maine... the rest being down in and around Pittsburg.

Ah! Ain't no place like home!

We've built a repertoire concept. A lot of people there have worked for us on a regular basis. If we can't use an actor in the picture, we employ him on the production side. Keep everyone working! That's worked for us before. Not always to the extent that they like to be employed, but we make a sincere attempt. I'd say 80% of people who work for us on a given picture have worked for us before.

What's the order of the stories?

First story we shoot, **The Crate**, is the second story in the film... **Something To Tide Over** is the first, with the beach sequence. Then, **The Crate**, **The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill**, **Father's Day**... **They're Creeping Up On You** is fifth and then there's a wrap-around, a sixth story which is prologue and epilogue, which wraps them all together.

How do you segue from one tale to the other, no Rod Sterling look-alike on-camera, I hope.

No, it's a comic book format. Inbetween all the stories are the ads, all the good ads that you're used to love



in the comics. Charles Atlas—"don't let people kick sand in your face." Straight ads. Printed. Not etched.

We're introduced to this idea in the opening sequence. Father takes away a comic book from the kid. A *Creepshow* comic—which is the illustration in our poster. That comic gets thrown on top of the trash. It's a rainy, stormy night in one of those housing estates. The wind takes the cover off the gerbage can and takes the first page over... Splash page of the first story... and the page comes alive... and you go into the first story. As every story ends we go back to the comic book and a new splash page... and at the end, we go back to the kid and his father for the denouement!

A splash surprise, no doubt? Splatter, even?

Well... I wouldn't want to tell you. How can I say it? I respect the audience too much.

Who's doing the illustrations?

Jack Kamen, who did the poster. He's one of the original artists who did a lot of the EC work back in the '50s. He's also doing all the stories' splash-page for the film.

And that's not all, I'm sure. You must have some exploitation-merchandising idea under the Laurel logo... Laurel has been into publishing before now. Oh sure, we're going into print. We're probably going to novelise the film. Well, no... we're going to basically publish Steven's screenplay, with photos or comic-book illustrations. The equivalent of a photo-novel but with screenplay and Jack's illustrations. Good thinking! That should end up as prized as your poster... How long will the film take to make?

Four months. Roughly three weeks a piece for the stories. Each one is a little movie unto itself. With, as I say, great character actors. What we're looking to say is that this is not *Friday the 13th*! I would hope not.

This is not *Zombie, Dawn of the Dead*, either that was a pure scare experience though not depending on the gross-out factor. This is really Steve and George flexing their muscles, if you will, in an area they've proved their expertise in.

Stephen King is out to scare the pants off us, though. He says he wants us to almost literally crawl out of the theatre. So what does scare people? It's not what you term the gross-out factor is it, but audience-

identification with what Steve and George put on screen.

Exactly! Identification with characters; and problems that you can relate to. *Creepshow* had an advantage because the characters are so stylised that you immediately know them. You don't need as lot of dialogue to know that... this businessman, the head of a large corporation, is a reel Scrooge. You'll know that right away that this particular corporate magnate has a particular ineptitude for bugs... insects.

*We're talking of *They're Creeping Up On Me*, of course...*

Right. It's the story (originally called *Bugs*) of this guy in his magnificent penthouse. And the night the bugs show up. *(He laughs)* We've got the head of the Museum of Natural History in New York to be what we call our bug-wrangler!

With a whip, to be sure!

The whole question was: How do we control the bugs? We looked at everybody else's bug movies and we were unsatisfied with everything. We basically decided, if we couldn't do it the way we want to do it, if we couldn't get the bugs to the hay, then we weren't gonna do the story. And we found out some very interesting things. It's not a question of getting the bugs to something, it's a question of driving them away from something! We also found that CO₂—carbon dioxide—knocks them out. So, we'll put the bugs out, wait for George to yell 'Action!'... the bugs will revive and away they'll go...

*It goes without saying, Richard, that we all expect a lot from *Creepshow*. Maybe too much... Like we all expected a lot from the last King movie. So... what did all you guys think of *The Shining*?*

(Pause) *(Long pause)*. I'll have to speak for myself on that. I wasn't very happy with *The Shining* at all! We work so hard on movies... I have to speak a little bit from the producer's perspective... The concept of someone getting 17 million dollars to go and make the picture they wanna make, with absolutely no interference, is what we're all working our behinds off for. For someone to take that opportunity and not respect the responsibility to the audience that's paying, I think, is somewhat... egotistical!

I really feel that there is a very little of the book, *The Shining*, in the movie, *The Shining*. Except for

some loose storyline about a hotel which takes possession of people in it. The worst thing that people have done with Steve's material is try and change it! It works very well because of the way it is. That's why *Salem's Lot* wasn't working for Warner Brothers. Why mess with what works? If you want to faithfully translate the aesthetic, as I said before, you don't have to do it line by line... But in any event I was disappointed with *The Shining* because it was not scary! It was billed as the movie that would scare the pants off everybody. And I just resented it.

I would be very surprised if Mr Kubrick had been to see a horror movie in the past three years, okay? And observed the audience. I mean when George sits there in front of the editing table, and I'm sitting in the back of the room, we're saying to ourselves, out loud, "Hey, they're gonna love this... or that!" Meaning the audience. We're not making the picture for ourselves... George is not just doing it for himself, his own satisfaction. We're very conscious all the time of the audience that we are making the picture for...

There's something very distasteful, if you will, about somebody heaving walked out of a theatre, having laid down five bucks, and feeling that we've ripped him off. We take everything, every comment about our films, personally. *Everything!* Down to the level that we don't want people walking out of the theatre saying, "Hey, I didn't get my moneysworth out of Romero and Rubinstein."

NEXT MONTH: RICHARD RUBENSTEIN REVEALS MORE ABOUT THE GROWTH OF GEORGE ROMERO, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, MOVIE MAGNATE AND JUST WHERE THEY'RE GOING IN THE '80s. INCLUDING 3-D... STAY TUNED (AND DON'T FORGET YOUR GLASSES).



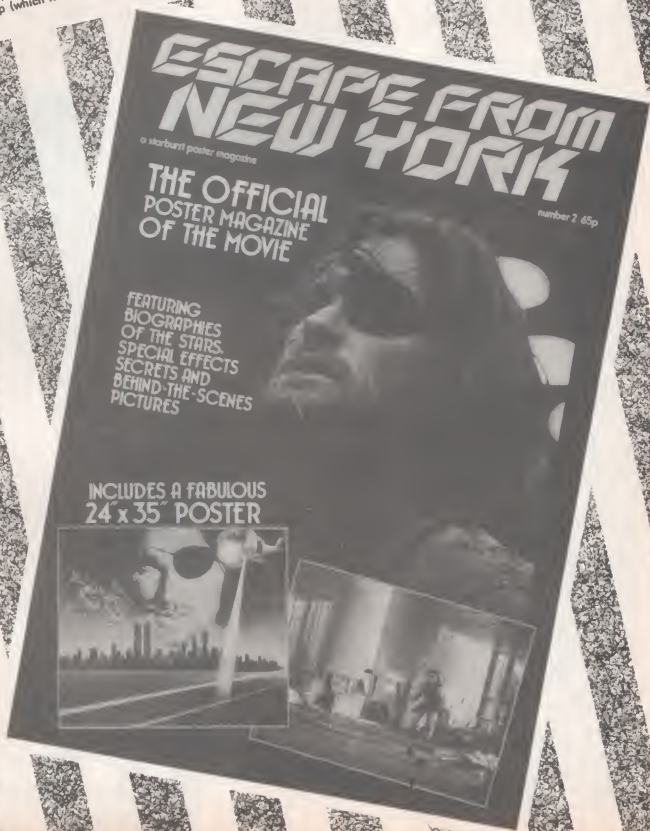
directing those locally-made specials. Rubinstein

TOP PRESS

THE STARBURST TEAM DOES IT AGAIN

That's right. After the enthusiastic response to our first poster magazine effort, *Excalibur* (still available from the address below), we bring you another of our bumper, value for money film tie-ins. Featuring the new John Carpenter movie, *Escape from New York*, the second Starburst Poster Magazine boasts information on the stars, the director and the special effects of the great science fiction film. All this plus a full-size reproduction of the movie poster.

The *Escape from New York* poster magazine is available from all good newsagents, or if in difficulty it can be obtained by sending 85p (which includes postage and packing) to Dangerous Visions, 19f Spital Road, Maldon, Essex. Make all cheques and POs payable to Dangerous Visions. Send no cash!



it's only a movie.

Well, the BBC came clean and admitted they were responsible for adding the extra strips of stars to the version of **2001** that they showed after Christmas. They even admitted that it was probably a mistake on their part (surely a BBC first) and that they had received a fair amount of adverse reaction over the matter (I know for certain that some of that adverse reaction over the matter (I know for certain that some of that adverse reaction came from Kubrick himself). But they couldn't resist adding that some of the reaction to their little innovation was *positive*...!

I find this hard to believe. What sort of dork-brain would write or call the BBC and say, "Gee, I really like those extra stars you put in **2001**. It added a whole new dimension to the movie—I especially liked the way they showed through the spaceship—and even helped me to understand the ending for the first time. I hope you will continue this practice. For example, next time you show **Gone With the Wind** perhaps you could have your scenic artists touch up the matte paintings in the film as they are beginning to look a bit faded... The possibilities are endless".

After all those lyrical, uplifting Australian movies we've been getting recently it's a pleasure to encounter **Mad Max 2** which has no redeeming artistic quality whatsoever but is simply an hour and a half of sheer blood-curdling brutality. I enjoyed it a lot and urge you all to rush and see it as it's unlikely it will ever show up as part of some Australian film season on BBC2 (with or without extra stars). Even John Baxter liked it and that's very unusual as he hates all Australian movies on principle. I remember staggering out of **Gallipoli**—the film, not the battle (I'm not *that* old)—so overcome with emotion that I was blinded with tears and was having to *feel* my way to the exit, when I ran into John in the foyer. I was about to say to him, "Aw, Jeez John, wasn't that a bonzer movie, fair crack of the whip?" (I tend to lapse into my native tongue during moments of emotional stress), when he got his first with, "What a load of old cobbler!"

So the very fact that **Mad Max 2** is an Australian movie that John likes automatically indicates that it's something special. It's got everything—bits of **The Ultimate Warrior**, **Star Wars**, **A Fistful of Dollars** and some of the most amazing stunts and car crashes I've ever cringed through. Obviously the union rules for Australian stunt men are different to what they are here or in the States—if they don't have a broken leg or arm by the end of a day's shooting their pay is docked. And if they end up dead they get a bonus. Considering the amount of convincing-looking carnage in **Mad Max 2** I'd be surprised if even one stuntman survived the whole film.

Unlike **Mad Max 1** which was dubbed into American, this one still has the original Australian voices—or at least the version I saw did. Perhaps the American prints will be dubbed as before, though Warner Brothers tell me they doubt this will happen, the feeling being that American audiences are now sophisticated enough to listen to unAmerican accents without going into



culture shock—but we'll see. As there isn't much dialogue at all the Australian voices shouldn't come as too much of a shock but there is at least one line that is going to get unintentional laughs from British audiences. It comes at the end of a sequence where a man and his wife have just been brutally attacked by the biker marauders (they make Hell's Angels look like social workers), the woman raped and killed and the man left studded with cross-bow bolts. Up walks the hero to the dying man after despatching one of the marauders—the man starts to croak his gratitude but the hero cuts him off, saying, "I'm only here for the gasoline".

That aside, *Mad Max 2* is a mind-boggler. Just one word of warning—be careful how you drive home afterwards. Watching the film left me with an overwhelming urge to get behind the wheel of a car and drive it through the side of a bus or through someone's living room. And I don't even drive. And now a few words about a movie I didn't like... just to keep my hand in (people have been complaining that I've been too nice recently, especially to *Heavy Metal* which no one in the world seemed to like except me). The film in question is *Ghost Story*. I didn't like the book either but for entirely different reasons. I found its success inexplicable. Like Stephen King, *Ghost Story*'s author Peter Straub uses the technique of taking traditional horror elements and mixing them up together to produce something new but whereas King has the skill and the writing power to genuinely revitalise the horror genre with this method Straub's efforts fail completely, in my opinion. The novel of *Ghost Story* was a rambling, incoherent collection of disparate ingredients. True, he threw in every horror gimmick he could think of but instead of fusing them into something that transcended the source material all the bits and pieces simply lay there where they fell, refusing to become a novel. And, most importantly, it just wasn't horrifying (the

climax where the hero fights in the car with the shape-changer, who has turned himself into a wasp, was simply ridiculous rather than frightening).

The film's director John Irvin and script writer Lawrence D. Cohen wisely junked many of the novel's more ludicrous elements and tried to create a single narrative out of the *pot-pourri* of sub-plots and digressions. Their most interesting change was to remove the strong misogynistic thread that runs through the novel—in the book the four members of the Chowder Society were victims of the woman, the shape-changer, who represents evil pure and simple, but in the film she is their victim. All her subsequent acts of destruction, as a ghost, spring from the fact as four young priggish (and piggish) men they were unable to cope with her sexuality and reacted by killing her (and killing her twice).

It's a nice idea, and provides the plot with a much-needed rationale, but it doesn't save the film from being a turgid, tedious mess. And I'm inclined to lay the blame at the feet of its director rather than the script writer (Lawrence D. Cohen did, after all, write the screenplay for *Carrie*). The film is prettily photographed, and features some marvellous matte paintings by Albert Whitlock, but moves at funereal pace, is disjointed and completely misjudges its horror set-pieces. If I wanted to be nasty I'd say this was a case where a novel has received exactly the film version it deserves.

Finally I want to join along with everyone else at *Starburst* in singing the praises of *Dragonslayer*. The plot and the script may be a bit threadbare, and the young lead actor in the wrong movie, but the style and the atmosphere of the film more than compensate for these shortcomings. It has a true sense of wonder to it and, of course, the dragon is fantastic. Why it failed at the box office in America will remain one of the great mysteries of all time. ●



Above: Some of the futuristic cars and bikes intent on causing carnage in the desolated Australian countryside in *Mad Max 2*. Below left: Mel Gibson once again plays Max, the brave and ruthless warrior in *Mad Max 2*. Below right: King Casiodorus (Peter Eyre) challenges Galen's (Peter MacNicol) magic powers in *Dragonslayer*.



book world

It's not often you can pick up a philosophy book hiding under the guise of science fiction. I didn't know what a treat I had in store as I began *Smile on the Void* by Scottish writer Stuart Gordon (Arrow, £1.75).

It's the strange story of Ralph M'Botu Kitaj, born in a Warsaw ghetto, adopted by a childless French couple, and eventually rising to a unique position of power in the 1990's. Kitaj is an enigma—is he a super con man or is he a visitor from another world... or is he an instrument through which unworlly powers make their presence known? *Smile on the Void* is a journey through the mind as Kitaj tells his story to his acquaintance, John Hall—from his earliest days in the ghetto, through Mau Mau Africa where he is taught their ways by Njeru the priest. There he spends several years with a black witch who bears his child and eventually curses him after he murders a man in a fit of jealousy. He moves on to California where he becomes a drug dealer and throws Andy Warhol Factory type parties—generally a vile and bitter man by this stage, holding all humanity in contempt. The time spent in California is spent in a way which seems to be completely against what we have drawn from the book to be Kitaj's true character and purpose. For a long time he denies his true self and in a way that is what I believe the book to be about—this is what we all do. Kitaj is a joker, giving us clues about a oneness with the Universe—that our true selves are all important but that in the end we are not important at all. The book also gives us an idea of what may happen socially in the late 1980's and 90's.

People are searching for something or someone to show them the "way".

Smile on the Void is not true science fiction, or at least this reader doesn't think so. It is a psychologically and spiritually complex study of a man's beliefs and ways of existence. I can only give you a hint of what the book is about. Draw from it what you will. Some may dismiss it as a pile of garbage but for others it may be a whole new insight into their own selves.

Unusual but highly recommended.

Ever since *Watership Down* appeared there have been those authors who have seen it as their responsibility to convince the reading public that animals HAVE DIGNITY. In this rash of ecological fairy stories comes *The Pig Plantagenet* by Allen Andrews (Arrow, £1.50).

Plantagenet lives on a farm in medieval Poitou, attended by his soulmate, the girl Adele. This is the story of Plantagenet, his wild boar cousin Grouin and their flight from slaughter by the lord of the land, Messire de Frebois and his compatriots (amongst them Adele's father) who decide that the creatures of the forest are an undesirable menace and should be eliminated by way of a battue. The Messire's plans are overheard by Brousse, a meddling and malicious magpie, who through flattery and deceit convinces Plantagenet (a somewhat dreamy pig) to lead the forest animals to safety. Little does he realise that he will be leading them into certain doom. Brousse's deception is discovered however, and the animals eventually escape, taking part in a battle with

the Messire's hound pack on the way, stay with their cousins for a while and finally filter back into the forest. Friendships are made, Plantagenet discovers himself, Adele grows up and the reader returns to his daily life, wondering what it is he has just read and why the hell he read it.

Allen Andrews is a competent writer often treating us to beautifully descriptive passages, but I found the dialogue between the animals unconvincing and uncomfortable. Animal names become boring and a little confusing and as I read my way through a dozen wolves' names I thought somewhere along the line I would run into Bilbo, Frodo, Thalin and Balin.

ALLEN ANDREWS *The Pig Plantagenet*

As memorable as *Watership Down*, as magical as *Dunnet Wood*—a novel of true enchantment



The battle sequences are fast and actually quite exciting in places and would be fun to see in an animated feature film but it is worth wading through a hundred pages of pretentious "wit" to enjoy a few pages of well written action.

Definitely only for those with porcine leanings. And so on to the piece de resistance of this month's fiction.

Somewhat new to the writings of Stephen King, but assured of his prowess by friends and colleagues I was eager to read *Cujo* (Macdonald, £6.95p), King's latest and biggest selling novel. I am now firmly won over and look forward to retracing King's writing career through his previous works.

Cujo is a 200lb St. Bernard dog, the well-loved pet of 10 year old Brett Camber who lives with his mother Charity and his father, Joe. He is torn between Charity's gentleness and Joe's rough masculinity. Joe is a mechanic and grease seems to pervade his whole character.

One day Cujo chases a rabbit into a bolt hole and is bitten on the nose by a rabid bat. The bite goes unnoticed by the family and from that moment Cujo's character and mind slowly disintegrate as the disease gets a grip.

Seven miles away, in the peaceful town of Castle Rock, Maine, live Donna, Vic and Tad

STUART GORDON

SMILE ON THE VOID

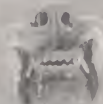
THE STUNNING NOVEL OF THE COMING MILLENNIUM



A NEW NOVEL FROM THE
MASTER STORYTELLER

CUJO

STEPHEN KING



Trenton, Vic is in partnership with Roger Breakstone, trying desperately to keep a faltering ad agency on its feet, when suddenly faced with the fact that Donna, through her desperate desires to retain her youth has had an affair with an unbalanced local tradesman.

Tad, their four year old son is terrified by the monster he is convinced lurks in the closet in his room, and his fears are so real that his father composes a set of Monster Words to be read each night at bedtime to keep Tad safe.

One day when Vic is away on business Donna has to take her car to Cambers' place for repairs. Charity and Brett are away visiting relatives, Joe lies with his friend, Gary, in a bloody heap in a nearby house and Cujo, now a crazed rabid animal crouches in a stupor in the Cambers' barn, contemplating savage death to any living thing he comes in contact with.

Cujo is a complex, perceptive and at the same time a terrifying, suspenseful and remarkably well paced novel. The whole second half of the book is a nail biting battle of wits and survival as Donna Trenton sits trapped in her car with her son and Cujo, now an insane and almost supernatural beast lies patient waiting for her to make a move. We are helpless as Donna and the boy sink further into the grasp of the relentless heat building up in their car. Feelings are played with over and over again as the book cuts back and forth to Vic who is away on an

advertising trip and to Charity and Brett, who are visiting Charity's sister—all blissfully unaware of Donna and Tad's plight. Each time Donna sees a way of escape her hopes are dashed and Tad, now suffering dangerously from dehydration fades into unconsciousness.

Cujo works on several levels—an out and out horror story, a supernatural thriller and a detailed character study. It plays on our fear of the ordinary being more than it really seems and of a basic fear of rabid infection. King is very perceptive also of a woman's feelings of being beaten down in a man's world—"men grapple Vic, women dust", and of ordinary human fears "I started to be afraid because I grew up after all".

Secondary characters within the book are not mere embroidery—they are dealt with intelligently and we feel that this is a real town populated by real people. As the book comes to an end, as the wounds close, both physical and emotional and the healing process begins we are left with a glimmer of hope for Donna's future and a sense of having experienced something very special.

Book of the month—perhaps the year!

As well as highlighting some of the new SF and horror titles in this column I'll also be occasionally looking at new books about SF and horror cinema.

John Stanley's *Creature Features Movie Guide* is the brave private publication

JOHN STANLEY'S CREATURE FEATURES MOVIE GUIDE



endeavour of San Franciscan TV presenter Stanley. Basically it's a guide to 2,753 SF/Horror/Fantasy (and their various sub-genres) movies. Unlike similar listings, such as Walt Lee's *Guide to Fantastic Films* or Don Willis' *Horror and Science Fiction Films*, Stanley is not presenting us with any kind of serious reference work. Rather, it is an arbitrary and personal choice by Stanley of a truly broad cross section (he includes Disney's animated features where they contain a fantasy element and even lightweight fantasy like *Miracle of the Bellis*) of the fantastic cinema.

Stanley's basic entry consists of the title of the movie (listed alphabetically), year of production and critical synopsis. Many of these are fun to read and it's nice at last to find somebody who also rates Argento's *Deep Red* as the mini masterpiece it is. But it's disturbing to find *Suspiria* a little later down the alphabet misspelt—and *Strangers of Bombay* isn't listed, and so on. Normally I would be annoyed by silly typos and obvious omissions but in truth John Stanley's style, which often breaks out into outrageous punning, is so likeable and his knowledge and interest in the genre is also apparent in the book. It's not indispensable in the sense of Walt Lee's work but it is endearing.

John Stanley's *Creature Features Movie Guide*, by John Stanley, 208 pages, illustrated, paperback. U.S. import—£5.75. ●

TV ZONE

The *Champions* was an innovative television series in the late sixties starring Stuart Damon (as Craig Stirling), Alexandra Bastedo (as Sharron Macready) and William Gaunt (as Richard Barrett) who played a team of superhuman agents, possessing extraordinary and unnatural powers. Receiving their out of this world physical and mental powers from a lost race of people in Tibet, *The Champions'* sensational skills marked the forerunner to the more sophisticated *Six Million Dollar Man* series.

THE CHAMPIONS

Producer: Monty Berman. Series created by Monty Berman and Dennis Spooner.

The Beginning

wr. Dennis Spooner. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: Stuart Damon (as *Craig Stirling*), Alexandra Bastedo (as *Sharron Macready*), William Gaunt (as *Richard Barrett*), Anthony Nicholls (as *Tremayne*); Felix Aylmer, Kenneth J. Warren, Joseph Furst. Three agents of an international security organisation are granted miraculous powers of physique and mental ability when rescued after an air crash in Tibet. They become super humans.

The Invisible Man

wr. Gerald Kelsey. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Peter Wyngarde, James Culliford, Basil Dignam. Strange noises in Craig's head reveal the truth about a big bank robbery.

Operation Deep-Freeze

wr. Gerald Kelsey. d. Paul Dickson. cast: regulars; Patrick Wymark, Robert Urquart, Walter Gotell. A little man with a gun is as strong as a big man with a gun. This is the maxim of the leader of a small country who, in an attempt to make the United Nations recognise his despotic power, establishes a secret missile base in Antarctica. It results in deep-freeze treatment for the *Champions*.

A Case of Lemmings

wr. Philip Bradley. d. Paul Dickson. cast: regulars; Edward Brayshaw, John Bailey, Jeanne Roland. The *Champions* investigate the apparent suicide of three Interpol agents.

The Interrogation

wr. Dennis Spooner. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Colin Blakely. Craig Stirling is caught up in a nightmare to which there seems no end—but is he dreaming or is it happening for real?

The Search

wr. Dennis Spooner. d. Leslie Norman. cast: regulars; John Woodvine, Reginald Marsh, Joseph Furst. The *Champions* face the task of saving London from atomic destruction when a nuclear submarine is stolen.

The Dark Island

wr. Tony Williamson. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Viadek Sheybal, Alan Gifford, Bill Nagy. The *Champions* investigate mysterious happenings on a tropical island which threaten world peace.

The Iron Man

wr. Philip Broadley. d. John Moxey. cast: regulars; George Murcell, Patrick Magee, Robert Crewdson. The three *Nemesis* super humans become the world's most unusual



domestic staff when assigned to protect a former dictator whose life is in jeopardy.

The Experiment

wr. Tony Williamson. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Allan Cuthbertson, Madalena Nicol, Caroline Blakiston. A scientist tries to create super-humans equal to the *Champions*—and tricks Sharron into taking part in the experiment.

The Fanatics

wr. Terry Nation. d. John Gilling. cast:

regulars; Gerald Harper, Donald Pickering, Julian Glover. Richard Barrett becomes a member of a group of fanatical assassins—and learns that his boss, Tremayne, is an intended victim.

The Silent Enemy

wr. Donald James. d. Robert Asher. cast: regulars; Paul Maxwell, Warren Stanhope, James Maxwell. The *Champions* go to sea on a macabre trip to reconstruct the voyage of a nuclear submarine which has been found with its entire crew dead.



To Trap a Rat

wr. Ralph Smart. d. Sam Wanamaker. cast: regulars; Guy Rolfe, Edina Ronay, Michael Standing. The Champions pursue the trail of some tainted drug suppliers.

The Gilded Cage

wr. Philip Broadley. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; John Carson, Jennie Linden, Clinton Greyn. Richard Barrett is abducted—and Craig Stirling has to find out why, who his captors are, and where he is being kept.

Get Me Out of Here!

wr. Ralph Smart. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Frances Cuka, Ronald Radd, Philip Madoc. The Champions step in to rescue a girl doctor who is being held against her will on a Caribbean island.

The Ghost Plane

wr. Donald James. d. John Gilling. cast: regulars; Andrew Keir, Hilary Tindall, Michael Wynne. A frustrated scientist's vendetta with officialdom leads to his selling secrets to a foreign power—secrets that will provide supremacy in the air.

The Night People

wr. Donald James. d. Robert Asher. cast: regulars; Terence Alexander, Adrienne Corri David Lodge. The Champions come up against the supernatural in a remote Cornish village.

Twelve Hours

wr. Donald James. d. Paul Dickson. cast: regulars; Mike Pratt, Peter Howell, John Turner. The Champions are drawn into an undersea drama following an assassination attempt in a submarine.



Shadow of the Panther

wr. Tony Williamson. d. Freddie Francis. cast: regulars; Zia Mohyeddin, Donald Sutherland, Tony Wall. The Champions investigate when a Nemesis scientist dies of fear, apparently through Voodoo, in Haiti.

Full Circle

wr. Donald James. d. John Gilling. cast: regulars; Patrick Allen, Martin Benson, John Nettleton. Craig Stirling poses as a prisoner and embarks on an escape plan with a fellow-prisoner who is suspected of being a foreign spy.

Reply Box No. 666

wr. Philip Broadley. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Anton Rodgers, George Murcell, Nikke Arrighi. Set in the Caribbean, the Champions investigate a mysterious ad in the personal column: "Wanted—a parrot that speaks Greek."

Project Zero

wr. Tony Williamson. d. Don Sharp. cast: regulars; Rupert Davies, Peter Copley, Geoffrey Chater. The Champions become boffins when a leading scientist is murdered and many others disappear.

The Survivors

wr. Donald James. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Clifford Evans, Donald Houston, John Tate. The Champions are involved in a strange treasure hunt in the Austrian Alps.

The Body Snatchers

wr. Terry Nation. d. Paul Dickson. cast: regulars; Bernard Lee, Ann Lynn, Philip Locke. The Champions encounter eerie drama in Wales and defeat a macabre espionage plot.

The Mission

wr. Donald James. d. Robert Asher. cast: regulars; Dermot Kelly, Anthony Bate, Patricia Haines. Sharon Macready looks into a mission for vagrants that provides a cover

for a strange organisation running an escape route for wanted war criminals.

The Gun-Runners

wr. Dennis Spooner. d. Robert Asher. cast: regulars; William Franklyn, Paul Stassino, David Lodge. Murder in the Burmese jungle takes the Champions into a gun-running mystery.

The Nutcracker

wr. Philip Broadley. d. Roy Ward Baker. cast: regulars; William Squire, David Langton, Michael Barrington. The Champions are asked to test the security of a top secret vault—which is programmed to kill any intruders.

The Final Countdown

wr. Gerald Kelsey. d. John Gilling. cast: regulars; Alan MacNaughtan, Wolf Frees, Derek Newark. The Champions face the task of finding a World War II atom bomb which could launch another major war.

Happening

wr. Brian Clemens. d. Cyril Frankel. cast: regulars; Jack MacGowan, Grant Taylor, Michael Gough. Three men find themselves alone in an atom test area, with the bomb due to go off at any moment. And if it does, it will devastate most of Australia. One of the men is Richard Barrett.

Desert Journey

wr. Ian Stuart Black. d. Paul Dickson. cast: regulars; Jeremy Brett, Roger Delgado, Nik Zaran. The Champions face danger in the desert when they escort a reluctant Bey to his North African country.

Autokill

wr. Brian Clemens. d. Roy Ward Baker. cast: regulars; Eric Pohlmann, Paul Eddington, Harold Innocent. Nemesis agents are mysteriously programmed to kill their own colleagues—and Richard Barrett's victim is Craig Stirling.



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WES CRAVEN

"Can a movie go too far?" said the catchline for one of the watershed gore movies of the early '70s. And for once a film lived up to its advertising in many people's eyes. It was for **The Last House on the Left** and it made such an enormous impact that its effect still reverberates with anyone who has seen it. Depending on your point of view it is either a moving and violently deromanticised look at America during the Vietnam era, or a despicable and utterly degrading voyeuristic experience. I happen to be in the latter school of thought and along with other aspects of his career, I put my feelings to director Wes Craven when he was in London recently, just as he finished the arduous filming of his latest movie, **Swamp Thing**.

"I have to be honest, even for me now it isn't a pleasant film to watch but I genuinely felt I portrayed what it actually felt like to kill somebody for real. The killing is absolutely heartless, the protracted violence was very human to me. I wanted to make a statement about violence and American movies at the

time. You must remember that I made the film at the time when people were watching villages being burned on the news as they ate their dinner. Nobody comes out of **The Last House on the Left** looking noble after they have killed somebody, even though it may have been for the right reasons."

The producer of **The Last House on the Left** was Sean S. Cunningham, now better known to contemporary audiences as the director of **Friday the 13th**. The photographer (super 16mm) was Steve Miner who made his directorial debut with that successful film's sequel. This talented collective were able to make **The Last House on the Left** when Cunningham's previous film became extraordinarily successful. It was a pornographic sex instruction film called **Together** and featured an actress called Marilyn Briggs who later changed her surname to Chambers. This led to one of the top exploitation releasing companies, Hallmark, showing interest in the film that was to become **The Last House on the Left**. The story was a virtual remake of Ingmar

Bergman's **The Virgin Spring** as it told of two girls on their way to a rock concert who are kidnapped and sexually tortured by a quartet of sadists. After murdering both girls, the killers wind up in the home of one of the dead girl's parents who, upon finding the disembowelled body of their daughter floating in a nearby pond, exact an equally horrendous assault on the killers themselves. The film was the first to feature that recent icon of horror movies, the chainsaw as the epitome of the murderous weapon but according to Craven, Tobe Hooper says he has never seen the film. The disembowelling, the attempted lesbian rape and the carving of initials on one of the girl's stomachs is disgusting and disturbing to watch. But it is precisely this emotion that Craven was after. "The film never leaves anybody unmoved. They are either fascinated, upset, drained or very angry. The film has such an undeniable strength that to discuss it, it really is like a war, you don't want to go back to it. When I think about it I thought I was adding a cartoon dimension to offset the onscreen carnage but..."

Craven expected the film to have a small circulation and was surprised that the film became the popular success it did. It was recently re-released in America in a slightly cut version and once again did very good box-office. Cunningham apparently wanted even more blood in the film but Craven's directorial restraint meant he didn't shoot the heroine's feet being singed by cigarettes and a scene featuring a rat that even I am not prepared to describe. After the film's success Craven was approached to do more of the same but he refused. "Why not two disembowelments they would say. I decided that when I did go back to doing a film like that again I would be less intense and use suspense rather than raw emotion. I never want to get back into that level of opening up violence on the screen. **The Last House on the Left** was an apocryphal film. I can't go back and find a film earlier than that in the genre that became so established of breaking barriers of what is allowed to be shown. **Psycho** I suppose... Sometimes I think it was a terrible film to make, other times I'm glad I was that angry."

Craven then spent three years trying to move into other areas but was always turned down because of the very strong typecasting of **The Last House on the Left**. "I wrote a very ambitious film called **Mustang** which was based on the true life story of a Colonel who was court-martialed for reporting American atrocities in Vietnam. All I wanted was 1/2 million dollars but nobody wanted to listen. So I wrote **The Hills Have Eyes**."



Left: Jupiter (James Whitworth), leader of the cannibal family in **The Hills Have Eyes**. Above: Lee Purcell as Julia, the Ozar Ozarkian black witch from **Summer of Fear**.

The simple story of **The Hills have Eyes** has the Carter family on holiday in their trailer. When they break down in the Californian desert they are attacked by a family of savage cannibals and after one of their number is killed and another kidnapped, they find the only course open to them is to retaliate on the same violent level. The film has a very effective nightmare reality and as he purposely set out to thrill and shock and consciously appeal to a demanding audience, Craven succeeds admirably. As with **The Last House on the Left**, **The Hills have Eyes** dealt with family microcosms. "Well they do say that you write about what you're closest to and what you experienced first. My deepest impressions come from my family so a lot of that works its way out through my movies. I didn't have a particularly horrendous childhood but I did suffer severe emotional stresses. A lot of things are planted deeply in the mind. The family to me is a very potent amalgam of what we later experience in the broadest sense. I set out to have the two families in **The Hills have Eyes** be mirror

same thematic territory of his previous films, that of an All-American family under threat, although this time it comes from within the actual family circle. The Bryant's give a home to their cousin Julia, a relation they have never seen, when her parents are killed in a car crash. In reality, Julia is a witch practising a form of Ozarkian Black Magic and before long she has alienated their daughter Rachel from her family, stolen her boyfriend, killed her favourite horse and threatens to take over as Mrs Bryant by having the mother killed in an accident. The film contains an exceptional performance by Linda Blair as Rachel and some fine imagery, like Julia, eyes blazing, bursting out of a Dark Room in slow-motion. With **Summer of Fear** Craven lost his exploitation tag and his next film, **Deadly Blessing** was his step into mainstream cinema.

Before **Deadly Blessing** however, things looked a little bleak. "I had written a script called **Marimba** about drug smuggling. Dirk



images of each other just so I could explore the different sides of the human personality—the two brothers being the antipodes of each other within the bounds of popular entertainment. I wanted that sort of complexity within the framework of something more sophisticated than **The Last House on the Left**. I didn't want to ever feel uncomfortable again about making a statement about human depravity and then engaging in it to make the point."

For his next film, Wes Craven proved he was working along the same lines as John Carpenter whose **Halloween** had just opened to eventual world-wide acclaim. It was an NBC-TV movie of the week called **Stranger in Our House** and it was considered good enough to release theatrically outside the U.S.A. as **Summer of Fear**. The subject matter appealed to Craven as much as American television's strict censorship code meant that he would have to make the film a study in unseen terror. As he says, "I wasn't allowed to have any violence and the story didn't need it anyway." Based on the novel by Lois Duncan, **Summer of Fear** continued in the



Right: Lee Purcell as Julia from **Summer of Fear**. Above: Louisa (Lois Nettleton) is looking for somebody in **Deadly Blessing** and wants to know if Martha (Maren Jensen) is involved.



Benedict and Tim McIntyre were cast but the money I was promised from Italy never came through. The same people had asked me to write a script on the Guyana tragedy and I wrote it thinking, My God, I'm going from being a director of horror films to a director of horrifying true incidents. I was really thankful when that was scrapped. I was really anxious to be working again. I hadn't done a feature since *The Hills Have Eyes* and I began to think I would never work again. I quickly latched onto the first thing I could and it turned out to be *Swamp Thing* so I started working on that when, the scriptwriters of *Summer of Fear* asked me to do a rewrite on a script they had had some interest in. It was called *Deadly Blessing* and while the producers of *Swamp Thing* decided about the script I had done for them, I did the rewrite and from that moment on jumped between the two projects until I filmed them virtually on top of each other. "*Deadly Blessing* is a psychological thriller in the vein that Craven likens to Hitchcockian

and is about three women being terrorised in rural Pennsylvania by a fanatical group of religious zealots called Hittites. The film works best in its quieter moodier moments, something that Craven realised when he took on the film. "*Deadly Blessing* had a very complex story and to my mind not a good one but the money was there. The film would have a good distributor and it was a chance to work with some interesting people so I did it. I tried to minimise the problems with the script due to all those red herrings and I thought I clarified it as much as I could. I guessed the film would live or die on its images rather than rely on great storytelling coherence. I'm pleased with the film. It came off looking pretty good, as if it cost a lot of money, but it only cost 2½ million dollars. It made its money back in the first three weeks of release and it is now well into profit." One of the best things in the film is the shock ending. Craven was astute enough to realise that audiences these days are now well prepared for a final twist in the last seconds of a film and decided to go for broke with an absolutely smashing



tongue-in-cheek pyrotechnic fireworks display. You are guaranteed to leave the cinema in sheer disbelief in what you've just seen. "I did the ending as a send up. It became quite apparent early on that having an ending with the girls just saying goodbye to each other wouldn't be enough. To my astonishment, the producers gave in to my demand for the new ending despite it being off-the-wall to say the least. It cost 200,000 dollars to film as we had to reconstruct the set but I was really thankful to them for letting me do it. The only argument we did have was that they wanted to shake the building before the effect but I thought that would only alert the audience that something big was about to happen. I lost." The finale was solely the work of Everett Alston and Ira Anderson as John Dyksta who was initially approached had other commitments. *Deadly Blessing* despite its complex plot I thought an easy whodunnit to work out. When I told Craven that my policy of watching films in this genre very closely for the first five minutes, as it was those that usually contained the answer, had paid off yet again, he laughingly promised to make a ▶

Above left: Lee Purcell as Julia stalks Rachel in the *Dark Room* *Summer of Fear*. Above: Linda Blair as Rachel in *Summer of Fear*.



mental note and fool me the next time he made a film in that genre.

Craven liked **Swamp Thing** much better as it was his from the start, even though the producers of the picture made his life hell. "They fired my cinematographer and the production manager and kept asking me why I needed this shot and that shot and why I needed all the coverage I was shooting. The reason for this was the film was being done on the cheap and they were under a completion bond. The film couldn't and doesn't rely on its special effects. As the producers went for the person who did the effects on the basis of who gave the lowest quote, you can understand why I had to make the film more a human experience." Craven wrote the screenplay as well as directed the 3 million dollar production and was told by D.C. comics that he could change the story of their ill-fated comic book character in any way he thought best. "But in actual fact I changed very little apart from peripheral characters." The story of **Swamp Thing** for those who have not read the comic books concerns Dr. Alec Holland, a brilliant scientist who has discovered a formula that stimulates plant growth which he realises would solve the world hunger problem. However a madman named Arcane wants to rule the world with Holland's discovery and in a fight with his



henchmen, Holland is splashed with the solution which bursts into flame causing him to run and disappear into the surrounding swamp land. The chemical reacts with the swamp waters turning him into a hideous half man/half plant being able to regrow severed limbs and take nourishment via his roots. He also finds out he's invulnerable and sets out to revenge his sister's death who was murdered by Arcane's ruthless men. "I changed the character of Cable, who is obsessed with finding out who the **Swamp Thing** is, into a woman so I could add a romantic element and work the story more on a *Beauty and the Beast* level. Then I realised I would have to change Holland's murdered wife into his sister as I didn't think it would be valid that three days after losing his wife he would be running around after Cable. There is also an Arcane character in the original story that was a magician but here he's just an international villain. In fact I'm combining all of **Swamp Thing's** villains into just one which is where Arcane gets transformed into a monster." The film which was shot on location in and around Charleston, South Carolina, has been given a distinct comic book style by Craven. "Lots of low angles, strange shadows, weird colours and fog." Although he wishes they could have had something equally as spectacular as the

Left: Wes Craven with one of his most potent images from **The Hills Have Eyes**. Above: Pluto (Michael Berryman) goes berserk in **The Hills Have Eyes**.

transformation scene in **The Howling**, Craven is glad that he turned down the idea of an electronically animated creature. "For the quote we were given I just knew we would never be able to pull it off. We would still be shooting now! There was also talk of fully motorised heads but I knew it wouldn't work. The money was all there but it was an inadequate amount for the picture. **Swamp Thing** is apparently a dry run for the producers to do **Batman**. It it's the same conditions I was working under, I wish whoever will be the director the best of luck." The complex special make-up requirements were the work of 32-year-old Bill Munns. It was his offer of 80,000 dollars that the producers couldn't refuse and he built the latex suits on show in the film. Although the suits were lightweight enough to help the stuntmen move properly and in theory reinforced enough to handle the weight of swamp water it was discovered that the swamps secreted an acid into the water that corroded the suits after a short while. Bill Munns found he had to spray an antacid solution onto the costumes to reduce this effect. Munns suit for the amalgam of monsters that Arcane becomes was designed with the mane of a lion, the face of a boar and a reptilian body and it was a design that won Craven's full support, "and the upshot is that



it all came together looking quite nice even though the special effects and make-ups aren't what it's about at all—I kinda like it—it's different, I don't know who's going to pay and see it but we'll see." **Swamp Thing** will be released in March by Avco Embassy in the States and hopefully not long after that in Great Britain by United Artists.

As a result of these last two films more doors have opened for Wes Craven. He is hoping for example that his script called **Circus Gang**, about the children of circus folk, will be filmed shortly be either Disney or Fox. Although he really does want to leave the genre and be known as a director rather than an *exploitation* director, it looks like his next film will in fact be in the genre where he first made his name. "It's called **Nightmare on Elm Street** and it is essentially about a girl who dreams about being followed by a man who wants to kill her. She is so frightened by this dream that she tells a girlfriend. The next day she is murdered in her sleep and then her girlfriend starts to have the same dream. The murderer getting closer and closer everytime she falls asleep. So it looks like I'll be toiling in the horror field for a little while longer."

I actually hope for a lot longer. After my talk with Wes Craven I only have the greatest admiration and respect for the director once dubbed 'the hardcore maniac of violence.' ●



Above: The climax of *Deadly Blessing*, about which nothing should be said. Above right: William Battyman (Michael Berryman) is trapped in the barn.

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